



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MCFOODS Takes Stock of Successful Holiday Youth Drives

MIDDLESEX COUNTY – From the hands of babes into the homes of struggling Middlesex County residents came thousands of pounds of nonperishables, just in time for the holidays.

In the past two weeks, Old Bridge High School’s Junior ROTC and a collaboration of Central Jersey scouts were responsible for nearly 15,000 pounds of donations that found their way onto the Middlesex County food pantry’s shelves.

Among a host of successful strategies, both service groups deployed their youngsters to area grocery stores, where potential donors and collectible items were readily available.

“We had 100 percent involvement,” said retired Chief Master Sgt. Tom Pitzer, a program head for Old Bridge’s Junior ROTC. “This gets these kids civic-minded and community involved.”

By Nov. 13, Old Bridge High School’s cadets were loading bins packed with 10,000 pounds of food into the Middlesex County Food Organization and Outreach Distribution Service’s van in assembly-line fashion.

“The Junior ROTC, it’s really like a cornerstone of who we are at our high school,” said Old Bridge High School Principal Vincent Sasso of a group that has swelled to more than 100-students strong in recent years. “We pride ourselves on being ambassadors of paying-it-forward, and the ROTC is no better example of that. This is one of the many things they do throughout the year to help.”

Neither drive would have been possible without the cooperation of local retail giants like ShopRite, Stop and Shop, Walmart, Acme and A&P.

For their part, the Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Crew, made up of co-ed East Brunswick troops, also had a tremendous showing, accounting for approximately 4,800 pounds of food collected on behalf of MCFOODS Nov. 7 and Nov. 8.

“As a community we needed to do something,” said Jesseria Lovelace, a committee chair for Troop 223, which partnered with Troop 132 for the collection. “We thought a food drive would benefit the community...and there was an outpouring of support.”

The surplus comes at a pivotal time, according to organizers at the Middlesex County food pantry.

“The need for our agencies is at a usual high for this time of a year,” said Jennifer Apostol, a project manager for the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, an entity overseeing MCFOODS’ operation. “Between an influx of clients, who are financially strapped because of the holidays and the seasonal baskets that these agencies are preparing, everyone’s resources are being stretched.”

For more information on launching a MCFOODS drive or to locate a permanent donation sites, log www.mciauth.com or contact Apostol at 609-655-5141.