



Synagogues out to raise big money for food banks

Nineteen synagogues from three Bay Area counties are participating in a drive for local food banks — not for food, but for funds. Organizers hope the fundraising effort will top \$100,000 this year.

“The great thing about this program is that it complements food drives perfectly,” noted Richard Hart, co-chair of the annual Holiday Dinner Drive.

While many congregations have food drives around the High Holy Days or Passover, the Holiday Dinner Drive asks people to send in checks or donate online in November and December, “when demand at the food banks skyrockets,” Hart said.

Synagogues are participating on behalf of the Alameda County Community Food Bank (Temples Sinai, Beth Abraham, Israel, Beth Shalom and Beth Torah, Congreg-ations Beth El, Beth Emek, Beth Israel, Beth Jacob, Netivot Shalom and Sha’ar Zahav, Kehilla Community Synagogue and Tri-Valley Cultural Jews), the San Francisco and Marin Food Banks (Congregations Beth Israel Judea, B’nai Emunah, Emanu-El and Sha’ar Zahav) and the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano (Congregations Beth Chaim, B’nai Shalom and B’nai Tikvah, Temple Isaiah and Tri-Valley Cultural Jews).

Each runs its own fundraising program, with guidance and materials from Holiday Dinner Drive volunteers. Congregation Beth Israel Judea in San Francisco, for example, has come aboard with the “\$36 Project” for the San Francisco and Marin Food Banks. The temple’s flyer notes that the organization is able to distribute \$6 worth of food for every \$1 it receives.

“Multiples of \$36 will, of course, be welcome,” Rabbi Danny Gottlieb said in a recent teaching to his congregation. “But if each of our BIJ households raised just \$36, that would be over \$7,000, which would buy \$42,000 worth of food — \$84,000 worth if we count the matching FedEx contribution.”

Through Thanksgiving, FedEx was matching all donations up to \$30,000 to the S.F. and Marin Food Banks.

Dan McClosky of Temple Sinai in Oakland started an initiative 13 years ago as a small effort to bring Thanksgiving dinners to needy East Bay families. Since then, more than \$750,000 has been raised for local food banks, according to Hart, also a Temple Sinai member.

“We’ve also developed a terrific partnership with the food banks, who have come to depend on the funds from this initiative every year,” Hart said.

Each of the local food banks has put together a website to make donating easy. Users can click on a synagogue or select one from a drop-down menu, though that’s not required to make a donation. The websites are <http://www.sffoodbank.org/dinnerdrive> for the San Francisco and Marin Food Banks, <http://www.accfb.org/dinner> for the Alameda County Community Food Bank and <http://www.foodbankccs.org/temple> for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

For more information on how to participate in the program, contact richard_p_hart@yahoo.com . — j.
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