

Dodd gets the scoop on 'Faith Food Fridays' in Vallejo

Senator impressed by nonprofit's work



Senator Bill Dodd talks to volunteer Jazalyn Cruz as he tours Faith Food Fridays to see how things function. Dodd set down with staff members to discuss pending legislation that assists the hungry. (Chris Riley—Times-Herald)

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Sen. Bill Dodd eased by Vallejo's needy picking up food boxes at Faith Food Fridays and into a place many elected officials seemingly avoid — reality.

"It's pretty hard to complain," Dodd said. "It's humbling to see people down on their luck. The economy has rebounded for many people, but not for everyone. It's astounding to me the numbers coming here every single week are just as large as they were five, six years ago when we were in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression."

Dodd was invited Friday afternoon to the twice-weekly food pantry, a ministry of Faith Bible Church of Vallejo. For about 45 minutes, he met with Mary Ann Buggs of Faith Food Fridays and Carly Finkle, policy and advocacy manager for Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

"We invited the senator to see first hand the work that food banks and our partners are doing in the community," Finkle said, praising Dodd "for the work he's doing in the State Capitol introducing legislation to fight hunger."

It was important that Dodd visited the food pantry at 826 Solano Ave., said Buggs.

“When an elected officials are able to see the face of hunger in their constituency’s face, it’s striking and brings home that there are a lot of people from all socio-economic sectors experiencing hunger in the city of Vallejo,” said Buggs.

With the short month, around 250 people picked up food boxes between the 2 to 5 p.m. time slot, some 50 more than the average Friday, said Buggs.

After the round table meeting with Buggs and Finkle, Dodd shook hands with volunteers and citizens and posed for photographs.

“There’s a lot of people coming here who haven’t had a meal in some time,” Dodd said, adding that he “feels blessed they reached out for me to come by and see this operation.”

“What an incredible organization it is,” Dodd said. “These types of organizations are run by people power .. the volunteers in here ... people who donate clothes and food .. and the food banks that are involved. I really think more people in Vallejo and surrounding areas in Solano County could use this place to donate.”

The people seeking help at Faith Food Fridays “come here once, twice a week and often have nowhere to go,” Dodd observed. “I’m humbled seeing the generosity right here; humbled by people and by donations.”

It’s also humbling, Dodd added, “to see the wonderful demeanor and humanity of people. It’s a community that respects each other and greets each other. I’m very impressed.”

Hunger, said Dodd, “is going to be here. We’re working on programs to try and liberate some of these people, programs that are county wide, state wide in that regard. A lot of these people work and have homes but just don’t make enough money to make ends meet.”

Faith Food Fridays (which also serves food boxes Tuesdays) “is a place they can come and supplement their food for their families, their children, adult parents. There’s an incredible need in our communities,” Dodd said.