

Plentiful potatoes

38 tons of donated potatoes will feed hungry around Oregon

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H&N photo by Jill Aho - An Oregon Food Bank truck picks up the second half of a 38-ton potato donation made by Staunton Brothers. The potatoes are headed to Roseburg, Eugene and Corvallis food banks. Pictured from left: Sid and Ed Staunton, John Hughto of Cal-Ore Produce and Frank King, member of the Klamath Falls Rotary Club.

People in the Klamath Basin know their neighbors are generous, and the farming community is no exception. Basin potato farmers keep the Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank supplied with potatoes throughout the year, but this year, a potato donation will benefit people in need elsewhere.

Ed, Sid and Mitchell Staunton, of Tulelake-area potato grower The Staunton Brothers, made their largest ever donation this year, Sid Staunton said. On Wednesday, an Oregon Food Bank truck picked up the last of a 38-ton, or 76,000-pound, potato donation from Cal-Ore Produce that was headed to food banks along the Interstate-5 corridor.

Rotary First Harvest helped the Staunton brothers find a way to transport their excess potatoes, which were delivered to Roseburg, Eugene and Corvallis.

"The Staunton Brothers are being very generous in sharing their harvest this way," said Rotary First Harvest co-founder Sharon Parks. "There is tremendous surplus within our nation, and if all the surplus was used to feed the hungry, there would be no food insecurity."

Food security low in state

In the U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual food security assessment only Mississippi had more households with very low food security than Oregon. One of the issues always has been getting the food to those who need it, Parks said.

"We have surplus on one hand and we have need on the other. The key is transportation and distribution," she said.

Sid Staunton said the donation was a team effort.

“Rotary First Harvest has given us an avenue where we can touch food banks,” he said. “It’s a really nice product to give to a food bank because it’s nutritionally high in value.”

Sid Staunton said the market for those potatoes wasn’t good and the brothers didn’t want them to go to waste.

David King, president of the Tulelake Rotary Club and Rotary First Harvest director, said the potatoes weren’t the only donation since Cal-Ore Produce washed and bagged them for distribution.

“They’re donating that value as well,” he said. “Through their generosity, they got the potatoes trucked to the shed, packaged and stored them while we arranged a place for them to go.”

Working with potatoes

Frank King, David King’s father and a member of the Klamath Falls Rotary Club, said together he and David keep the Klamath-Lake Counties Food Bank stocked with potatoes. The two work with area potato sheds to donate two pallets each a year.

“I don’t think we’ve ever been turned down,” he said. “I’m impressed with the willingness of people to give potatoes to the system, especially in these times.”

The Kings sometimes trade Basin potatoes for pears and peaches from Medford, Frank King said.

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