



Commodity service to transport food upriver to Concrete Food Bank

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by Adam Rudnick | Courier-Times

A new joint operation hit the road to curtail hunger in Skagit County last week.

Skagit Transit and the Skagit Food Bank Distribution Center have joined forces to create a food shuttle service, which will transport commodities from the center's Sedro-Woolley location east to the Concrete Food Bank twice per month.

The service kicked off last Thursday when a Skagit Transit bus loaded with several hundred pounds of food made its inaugural trip to the upriver center with Skagit Transit representatives and community action agency officials on board. Skagit County Commissioner Sharon Dillon joined officials who made the 40-minute trip.



"It makes so much sense to do this," Dillon said before boarding the bus last week. "It's a great utilization of existing resources."

After strapping the dozens of boxes of frozen food in place, about 10 officials boarded the bus at about 9:15 a.m. and headed east.

Skagit Transit Executive Director Dale O'Brien said the idea for the service originally came about through his involvement in Leadership Skagit. One night the group was discussing its 2008 goal to organize a food drive when the topic came up of how difficult it was to get food up to Concrete.

The idea for the shuttle service came from that conversation, O'Brien said. About a month later, Skagit Transit and the distribution center made their first trip east.

The trips will take place on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month.

Food center staff will prep the food at the center's main office located on 250 W. Moore Street in Sedro-Woolley. From there, the goods will be loaded on a dead head bus (one that travels to a location to begin its route) and unloaded in Concrete, food distribution center coordinator Arielle Stein said.

No additional funds will be required for the service since the bus travels up to Concrete regardless, O'Brien said.

Nearly one-fourth of low-income residents report going hungry due to lack of food, while one out of every five households in Skagit County rely on area food banks, according to a Skagit County Community Action Agency news release.

In 2007, the Sedro-Woolley-based food distribution center opened up to help the county's 13 food banks work more efficiently, Stein said.

"So far (the center) has been a benefit because we've handled donations that one food bank wouldn't be able to handle on its own," she said. "It's starting to open up some new possibilities."

For more information about the service, call 360-416-7585.