

Banks helping food pantry replenish shelves

BY WALI PITT
CHRONICLE INTERN

For most people in the Triad, summertime is just fun in the sun. Perhaps that is why many people seem to have forgotten the poor and hungry in our community.

However, Wachovia and First Union have teamed up with Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina and Greensboro Urban Ministries to collect food from Triad companies, groceries, and citizens for the third annual Summer Harvest Food Drive.

Officials of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina noticed an alarming trend when they saw that their food donations were considerably lower in the summer months. Three years ago Second Harvest Food Bank connected with Wachovia and Greensboro Urban Ministries to start the Summer Harvest Food Drive.

This year's drive should be particularly successful due to the recent merger between Wachovia and First Union. There are more branches for donations to be received, including 22 in Winston-Salem, 18 in Greensboro, and six in High Point, not to mention the branches in smaller towns (donations will go directly to agencies in those areas).

The summer is always a hard time for the food bank.

This summer there is only 700,000 pounds of food in stock,

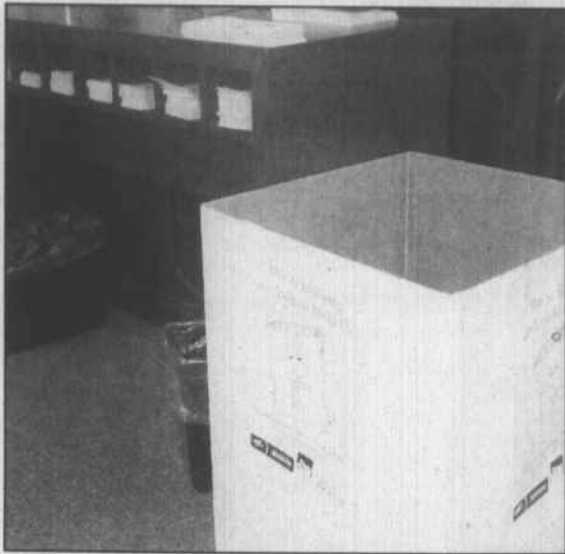


Photo by Courtney Gaillard
Donation boxes like this one will be clearly visible in branches of Wachovia and First Union.

which is only a fraction of the needed 1.5 million pounds of food normally in stock.

Jenny Moore of Second Harvest said the food bank "will survive" through the hard times with the help of this food drive and numerous other drives that will take place throughout the year. One main concern of this drive is to provide food assistance to children who receive free meals during the school year and during special summer programs. These

children usually receive one-third to one-half of their daily nutrients from meals received at school, and many rely on free meals at special summer camps and programs. Officials say that if donations don't pick up, some of the program's free-lunch programs could be jeopardized.

"There are more than 17,600 children in Forsyth County and more than 26,000 in Guilford on the USDA national lunch/breakfast; many of them face a greater

threat of hunger in the summertime without this program," said Nan Holbrook Griswold, the executive director of Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina.

The Greensboro Urban Ministry also helps families of the Triad, so it makes sense to help with a food drive to benefit the cause. The ministry operates several programs serving the

needy, including a family shelter, men's shelter, soup kitchen and emergency food pantry.

Faye Ellison, director of the food bank of Greensboro Urban Ministries, said, "With expectations that we'll double our emergency food assistance this year over 2002, we appreciate receiving food from the community to help us fill this burgeoning need."

The organizations are hoping that helping people in need will be a concern for Triad residents all year, not just during the holiday season.

Take nonperishable items such as Hamburger Helper, Tuna Helper, canned tuna, macaroni and cheese, canned fruit, and vegetables to any Wachovia or First Union

Red, white and (Dan) Blue



Photo courtesy of Blue for Senate

Democratic U.S. Senate hopeful Dan Blue spent the Fourth of July in Greensboro, where he took part in the city's annual Freedom Walk. A team of Blue supporters decorated Blue's Dodge Ram and walked alongside as Blue waved to the crowd and shook hands. Blue will face several Democrats in the upcoming primary, which is expected to take place soon.

Charters

from page A1

In its report, the center recommends that the 100 cap be kept for at least five years so that data can be examined to determine if charter schools are worthwhile. The report also recommends that the General Assembly implement rules that would require charter school officials to spend a year planning and securing finances before opening schools to students.

The center says this will help reduce the number of charter schools that struggle with financial management. The State Board of Education has revoked the charters of 14 schools since 1997. Most of them lost their charters because of financial malfeasance. Among the closed schools cited in the report for financial difficulties was LIFT Academy, a Winston-Salem school that closed after the 2000-2001 school year after waging a legal challenge to the state's claim that the school mismanaged its finances.

NCCPPR also recommends that the General Assembly not grant charters to schools that will target a "narrow racial or ethnic population." If accepted, this recommendation could stop the development of Afro-centric charter schools that aim to teach the three R's from a black perspective. Of the six charter schools in Forsyth County, two were cited in the report for their lack of racial balance. Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge and Quality Education Academy. Both of the schools have Afro-centric themes. According to the report, both had school student populations that were 100 percent non-white during the 1999-2000 school year.

During interviews with The Chronicle, administrators, teachers and parents have said the focus on African and African-American culture has helped QEA students excel and has increased their self-esteem.

Others support that point of view. Jackie Mburu, director of Wake County's SPARC Academy, a school that has only black students, said there are more pressing issues than diversity.

"Diversity is an issue, but the first thing we've got to do is get these kids satisfied with themselves," Mburu is quoted as saying in the NCCPPR report. "Once we build their self-esteem, then they can reach out to other groups."

The NCCPPR report also brings into question the ability of charter schools to educate children. The report says that charters have not performed as well as public schools on the state's controversial end-of-grade tests. During the 2000-2001 school year, only 22 charter schools met exemplary or expected growth on the tests, while 56 charters received no recognition or were designated as "low performing." But charter schools have made some gains. The report points out that for the 2000-2001 school year, nearly 54 percent of charter school fourth-graders passed the state's writing test, up from the 36.2 percent that passed the test the previous year.

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