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CALGARY HERALD



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Wednesday, March 27, 2013



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Food Bank aims at world record for donations

Mario Toneguzzi, For the Calgary Herald
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Over the past few decades, the signs of Calgary's success have been evident everywhere you turn.

Huge, shiny downtown office skyscrapers housing some of the country's biggest and most important corporations that fuel the national economy.


Luxury international retailers and brands setting up shop to sell everything from motor vehicles to clothing.



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Julie Brewster is the development co-ordinator of organizational giving with the Calgary Food Bank.

Leah Hennel, Calgary Herald

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Buoyant sales in the high-end residential real estate sector.

And of course, high levels of personal income and disposable income.

Despite the clouds of economic uncertainty in Europe and the United States, Calgary seems to be in a bit of a bubble with the city and region either leading the country or near the top for various economic indicators from GDP growth to employment growth to consumer spending.

But the streets here are not all paved with gold. I was reminded of that recently when I paid a visit to the Calgary Food Bank.

Watching a steady stream of people walk out of the facility in southeast Calgary was a stark reminder that Calgary really is a tale of two cities.

In Calgary, when speak-ing of record years it's usually a good sign of things, particularly for business.

But not for the Calgary Food Bank.

Julie Brewster, development co-ordinator, organizational giving for the organization, tells me during a recent tour of the facility that it has experienced four record years in a row in terms of clients.

Pretty sad when you think about it.

And obviously with so many clients to feed the food bank needs support, particularly donations.

Here's where the city can come together and those who have can help those who don't.

The annual City Wide Food Drive takes place Saturday (September 8) between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. and this year, its 30th year of service, the food bank wants to reclaim the Guinness World Record for most non-perishable food collected in a single day.

This is the eighth year the food bank has done the citywide drive and over the seven years it has collected a staggering 2.6 million pounds of food.

In 2008, it broke a world record by collecting over 400,000 pounds of food in a single day. That record was held until 2011 when an American charity collected more than 500,000 pounds. This year Calgary's annual food drive is aiming to collect 560,000 pounds of food.

Residences throughout the city by now will have received a donation bag on their front doorstep. If you can, fill the bag with non-perishable items and leave the bag on the front doorstep on Saturday.

About 10,000 volunteers are poised to pick up the bags during the food drive.

The food drive is organized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with help from the food bank volunteers and donations.

Last year, 146,947 people were fed through the emergency food hamper program. The hampers provide seven days worth of food for a family based on the Canada Food Guide.

"When we hit 125,000 two years ago, we thought that was incredible," says Brewster.

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