

Community Resource & Recreation Center

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CRRC Planning to Build New Facility for Expanded Programs

In the children's book "Stone Soup" two hungry soldiers create a pot of soup from the little bits of food provided by reluctant villagers. It was a unique view of what can be done when everyone does just a little bit.

Similarly, many individuals and families can be fed when a community comes together to do it. That was the vision many years ago, and it continues to be part of the mission at the Community Resource & Recreation Center (CRRC) of Canyon Lake, today.

CRRC annually recognizes September as Hunger Action Month, which was initiated by Feeding America to bring awareness to food insecure people across the nation. During the month, CRRC holds a soup supper and "empty bowls" event, to symbolically recognize the many hungry people in the Canyon Lake community. The Empty Bowls project helps feed families in Canyon Lake by supporting the CRRC Emergency Food Pantry.

One-in-four children in Comal County – and, one-in-five seniors – are food insecure. They aren't sure of where their next meal will be coming from, according to Feeding America, said Maureen Schein, resource program manager at CRRC.

"We like getting our local schoolchildren involved in this project," she said. "Last year, parents told us their children didn't understand that some of their classmates didn't have enough food. It was a good educational program."

The CRRC Food Pantry sees a steady increase, most years, in the numbers of people it feeds, Schein said. As the population in Comal County grows, so does the need for CRRC services. Food insecure families exist in the community and need to be served. Additionally, the organization is looking at some other ways to assist these families.

“We hope to provide some classes to help them; cooking classes that utilize the foods they receive from our food pantry; nutrition classes on what they should be trying to serve their kids,” she said. “We’re offering more produce now, thanks to our partnership with the San Antonio Food Bank, but not everyone knows how to serve some of the vegetables we’re getting. We want it all to be used.”

But, in order to store the additional produce, and to have a place for the classes, CRRC is going to need more space. It outgrew its current facility years ago, Schein said.

Seeing this need, the CRRC Board of Directors developed a strategic plan that envisions a new facility and expanded programs as the top priority.

“If the CRRC is going to be a responsible community member as well as an accountable service organization, we have to grow into the future to accommodate the needs of our residents,” said Board Chairman Diane Schaule.

The organization received a \$250,000 matching grant from the McKenna Foundation in June of 2014 for use toward the construction of a new facility to house the Food Pantry and classroom space for enhanced educational opportunities.

“In less than 18 months, we made the match,” Schaule said. “There’s a lot to be thankful for, here in Canyon Lake, and our community is at the top of the list. It has been very, very supportive.”

Groundbreaking could happen within the next couple months. But additional funds are still needed to complete the building.

Schein said the building will house classrooms, including a training kitchen, for the classes that are planned. Job skills, lifestyle, nutrition and dietary classes will be held, along with the cooking classes.

CHRISTUS Santa Rosa and the San Antonio Food Bank have offered to help with the nutrition and cooking classes. Resolute Health has offered up a TeleHealth machine for basic health testing. And New Braunfels Works is working with CRRC to create a Canyon Lake chapter for life and job skills.

“And we can’t overlook the first need,” Schein said, “and that is the lack of storage space for our food pantry. We have to have sufficient stock to provide the food to families, and we just don’t have the room to do that in our current facility.”

The Community Resource & Recreation Center (CRRC) was formed in 1983 to address food and other basic necessities of Canyon Lake residents. While the mission has been adjusted, it has not changed dramatically. The organization counts on the kindness, generosity and abundance of the Canyon Lake community.

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