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Partnering together to feed families

Suffolk businesses and organizations are coming together to hand out food to those in need.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture started a program called Farmers to Families. This program helps donate fresh food to those in need. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more families find themselves in hard times as unemployment rises, restaurants limit their services, and grocery stores are filled with more people than some are comfortable with yet.

“It’s unbelievable, we have had a steady line this morning starting at 8:15, and this wasn’t supposed to start until 11,” said Simonee Thomas, organizer of a distribution that took place Monday at Temple Beth El in North Suffolk. “We had to turn people away last week, so everyone came early to make sure they got some.”

Numerous organizations have partnered together to help distribute these boxes. The distribution was hosted at Temple Beth El on Bridge Road. Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority picked up two pallets to take to Hoffer, Chorey Park, and Colander Bishop Meadows Apartments. Venture Tours volunteered to distribute boxes into other neighborhoods.

“We are so thankful to be given this opportunity,” said Jimmy Hall, co-owner of Venture Tours. “Our business has been down right now, so this is a great opportunity to keep our minds in the right place.”

This program is part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program and was announced by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in April. Unloaded from the trucks every week are 1,200 boxes ready to go to homes in need.

“The government has dropped a lot of money to the USDA to help farmers who really need help,” said Thomas. “In turn, it helps families who are in need as well. It gives them the food and security they need.”

These boxes include a substantial amount of groceries, including milk, potatoes, fruit, eggs, sour cream, cottage cheese, hot dogs, chicken and vegetables.

Every Monday since Oct. 5, this group has passed out numerous boxes to families in need. The last planned giveaway is Oct. 26.

“I hope it can continue so we can continue to serve more families, especially during November and December for the holidays,” said Thomas.

For those who are still in need, at 3 p.m. every Monday and Wednesday, Temple Beth El hosts its feeding ministry.

“Local restaurants provide 120 hot meals for us to give away twice a week,” said Elder Ezra Locke, the local pastor at Temple Beth El. “It’s first-come, first-served, and we had to turn away 10 cars last week for it.”

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