

A food pantry on wheels

BallenIsles donors buy refrigerated truck for Feed the Hungry

By Sarah Peters
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PALM BEACH GARDENS — A food pantry will rescue a million more pounds of fresh meat and produce from landfills and get it to hungry people instead, thanks to a new truck from the BallenIsles Charities Foundation.

Feed the Hungry used the 40-foot diesel truck to get Thanksgiving meals to 6,300 families, or more than 25,000 people, volunteer Director Dan Shorter said. They'll do it all over again for Christmas. The refrigerated truck allows the charity to pick up loads of corn, lettuce, ham, or chicken and safely store it until it's ready for delivery.

"There's a lot of very nice people in Palm Beach County who want to donate food. If you have a refrigerated truck, it makes it a lot easier," Shorter said.

On its maiden voyage, the truck picked up 1,000 turkeys for the Thanksgiving giveaway, BallenIsles Charities Foundation President Mark Freeman said.

The truck will allow Feed the Hungry to rescue about a million pounds of food, worth millions of dollars, per year. Shorter expects the truck will last for a decade or two, so all of that adds up.

"Thank you for helping us to feed hungry children and senior citizens and all the hungry people who don't know where their next meal is coming from," Shorter told a crowd of about 350 BallenIsles residents and guests.

The truck was kept out of sight until they shouted, "Bring that truck!" and a driver brought it up the road alongside the terrace where everyone gathered. People posed for pictures in front of the truck parked along the East golf course after the big reveal.

The new addition is more fuel efficient than the the pantry's other refrigerated truck and three vans, and it's under warranty, which will save money on repairs. All of that is money the pantry can reinvest in feeding people, Shorter said.

The BallenIsles Charities Foundation is paying for the \$175,000 truck in two or three installments, Freeman said. The first has already been made. How quickly they can pay it off depends on the generosity of donors.

The foundation has awarded roughly \$2.3 million to 60



Palm Beach Gardens Mayor Maria Marino (from left), Vice-Mayor Carl Woods, Jacqui Shorter, Mark Freeman, Dan Shorter, and Councilman Mark Marciano celebrate the unveiling of the 40-foot refrigerated truck, which BallenIsles' Charities Foundation donated to Feed the Hungry, outside the main clubhouse Friday. [PHOTOS BY RICHARD GRAULICH/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]



Residents celebrate during the unveiling ceremony on Friday.

charities in the seven years since its inception, and its leaders hope to top \$3 million in its eighth year, Freeman said. Residents formed the charity because they wanted to give back to the community beyond their gates.

Usually, the foundation gives smaller grants to dozens of charities. Everyone involved

wanted to do a higher-impact project, so the foundation asked the charities what they would do with a grant of \$100,000 or more. Most wanted to build buildings, which didn't excite the grants committee, Freeman said.

"We wanted to really help the people that we serve," he explained.



BallenIsles Charities Foundation raised \$575,000 this year, some of which bought a 40-foot refrigerated truck for Feed the Hungry.

Cue Shorter's proposal for the refrigerated truck. Because of Feed the Hungry, 2,000 families receive 100 pounds of healthy food from January through October. Many of them are senior citizens starving behind the closed doors of their houses or families with multiple children, Shorter said.

BallenIsles resident Chere Goldstein said they're all very fortunate to live there, and everyone puts "an extraordinary effort" into the foundation.

"We'd like to pass it on and be a meaningful part of the entire community."