

Local realtors donate to food pantry

By Lily Avery
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YOUNG HARRIS – Towns County Food Pantry and the Ninth District Opportunity Inc. both received generous donations for the holiday season from the Northeast Georgia Board of Realtors on Wednesday, Nov. 9.

Chief Executive Officer Colette Hoffman and Towns County Director Mike Stewart, both with the board of realtors, presented Community Resource Manager Teresa Stephens with two checks, each amounting to \$250, to be used to assist in purchasing food for not only the upcoming holiday meals, but also daily food supplies, as well as emergency electric services.

According to Stephens, any donation big or small is greatly appreciated, and this donation will lessen the financial strain that is sometimes faced during the holiday rush.

“The money given for Ninth District will probably be used for emergency electric service through the winter because people’s bills get so high,” said Stephens. “Sometimes they don’t qualify for our programs because it is income based.”

“This money will go in as non-federal money so we can help people who are over that guideline but are facing some kind of crisis.”

“The food pantry money will go directly for food. We pay 18 cents a pound at the food bank if we can get it, through the Northeast Georgia Food Bank of Athens, or we will buy locally. We source wherever we get the best deal.”

According to the website, Ninth District is a private nonprofit corporation that assists low-income families in need and promotes self-sufficiency and economic stability.

Those in need must qualify under a certain income bracket determined by the federal government to receive assistance. For more information, visit www.ndo.org.

The Food Pantry, on the other hand, does not require an income qualification, and exists solely to help any area residents in need of a helping hand, both



Colette Hoffman and Mike Stewart present Teresa Stephens, center, with donations for the Towns County Food Pantry and Ninth District Opportunity, Inc.

short-term and long-term.

“The Food Pantry, we serve about half a million pounds a year,” said Stephens. “The distribution is every two weeks, and we try to do something a little special for the holidays. “This year, we’re doing large chicken roasters because the turkeys were just too expensive and the hams were too expensive. We just did what we could do.”

“The pantry does not get any federal grants; it’s all public and private donations from area people. A lot of the churches in the area do support us. We’re under their 501(c)(3). “There’s a Towns County Cooperative Ministries that this organization actually sits under for the food pantry.”

Homebound food boxes for elderly and homebound citizens in the county are another service provided by the pantry. According to Stephens, the pantry delivers homebound boxes to close to 90 area residents.

Those on the homebound list are served food every Tuesday on a weekly basis.

“We have so many families that are low-income here,” said Stephens. “The median income in Towns County is \$28,000 a year, and most of my people are living on \$12,000 a year or maybe less than \$700 a month.”

“Most of the families

can’t pay to own a home, so they rent, and that takes a chunk out of their income as well. They just can’t make it, so this actually helps them get through the week. These boxes really can help a person out, because food is so expensive right now.”

The Food Pantry is open Mondays through Fridays, from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m., and from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. On distribution days, which take place every other Tuesday, the pantry is open from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. for residents to pick up a food box.

However, Stephens said that anyone in need of food can visit the pantry during open hours on any day and can be fed.

For those wishing to donate, both food and money donations are accepted and can be brought by the Food Pantry during regular open hours.

The Towns County Food Pantry is located at 1294 Jack Dayton Circle in Young Harris.

“If anyone wishes to volunteer, they can call us at (706) 896-4783, or come by and we’ll introduce them to the guys in the back,” said Stephens. “There’s usually 700-plus volunteer hours a month that goes into this organization, so we do have a large volunteer base.”

“We can use volunteers anytime, just because it takes so much to get it done.”

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was a gift of God, because I was at a tournament and my coach came up to me and just started talking to me about the possibility of it. If that wasn’t God working, then I don’t know what it was.”

According to CVCC Head Softball Coach Steve Osteen, Gurley’s signing was just as much a surprise to him as it was to her. In the 17 years that Osteen has been a coach, he has never signed a player from a tournament, normally recruiting players after high school.

“I happened to be at a tournament in Columbus,” said Osteen. “Jordyn was actually just warming up and getting ready for a game. Just the sound and the speed of the bat when she was over there warming up made me stop and watch.”

“So, the rest of the day I just followed her around and watched her play. I think Jordyn is the first one that I’ve actually ever signed from a tournament.”

While Gurley typically

plays third base for the Towns County Indians, Osteen said he was already thinking of trying her out in other positions, and that he cannot wait to get her on the field with the rest of his Pirates.

“She’s got a tremendous bat speed and a tremendous hand speed with the ball,” said Osteen. “She was playing third base then, but I expect her to probably fit in at first base for us.”

“The more you’re around her, the more she’s just overwhelming to you. Her attitude, her personality – I’ve just got to believe that there’s going to be amazing work ethic there.”

“From everybody I’ve talked to and asked, how was she with you, they all keep saying that her work ethic is great. So between that and what I’ve seen her do with swinging a bat, she’ll be successful at CVCC.”

This positive attitude and sense of a strong work ethic,

also noted by her teachers, is apparent when talking to Gurley as she explains what she feels will be the only difference in her transition into collegiate sports.

“I don’t really know how it’s going to be going from high school ball to college,” said Gurley. “I do think that it will be more exciting. I’m sure that people will be there that will actually want to play because they’ve been given scholarships to play. I think it’ll be a lot of fun.”

Since CVCC is a junior college, Gurley plans to earn her associate’s degree and later transfer to a four-year college to pursue exercise science. She hopes to either become an athletic trainer or physical therapist.

“I still can’t believe it,” said Gurley. “I’m just so excited and can’t wait to see where life takes me from here. It’s going to be a lot of fun, I’m sure.”



When TCHS senior Jordyn Gurley graduates in May, she will go on to attend Chattahoochee Valley Community College on a softball scholarship



Gurley celebrated her signing at the high school with teammates on Thursday, Nov. 10.