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Local company sponsors state-wide food drive

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By **Matt Rocheleau**, *Globe Correspondent*

A Framingham-based convenience store company is sponsoring a state-wide food drive for the second consecutive year aiming to raise 12,000 pounds of non-perishables to benefit local food pantries for the coming holiday season.

The drive, now in its third year, will be supported by Cumberland Farms and is led by Massachusetts 4-H, a youth development program based at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

On Nov. 1, all 190 Cumberland Farms stores across the Bay State setup collection boxes where non-perishable food items can be dropped off until Nov. 30.

“At Cumberland Farms our mission is to give back to our communities,” said Mr. Ari Haseotes, president of Cumberland Farms Retail Division, in a Nov. 9 press release announcing the drive. “The rising hunger among families in our state is astounding and unacceptable. We are proud to sponsor the young people of 4H who are working hard to ease the burden of families in need.”

Last year Massachusetts 4-H collected 17,500 pounds of food plus \$1,000 in cash donations. There is no tally yet on donations so far this year.

All donations are greatly appreciated by the food banks, and meals are especially welcome over snacks, said Cumberland Farms spokeswoman Carolyn Evert. High-protein foods, like peanut butter or tuna fish, and personal hygiene products are also in great demand, she said.

Throughout the month until the drive’s conclusion, 4-H members will retrieve donations from each store, and deliver them to local food banks.

According to statistics from Project Bread, an anti-hunger organization in Massachusetts, more than a half million state residents struggle to put food on the table.

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