

## Treasure Box helps churches help needy in Phoenix

by Sadie Jo Smokey - Jan. 2, 2010 07:43 AM  
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Times are tough for everyone it seems. For houses of worship in Phoenix how to help others without zapping their own finances has been a puzzle. But a Southern California company has a solution. A \$30 box of frozen food valued at \$65 to \$100 called The Treasure Box.

In December, Ronald and Barbara Sanders picked up three boxes of frozen food at Church of the Beatitudes in north central Phoenix. They picked up a box for themselves, their handicapped sons and a neighbor who lives alone. Barbara Sanders said she likes that the food is affordable and there isn't a stigma attached to it. And while she admits it's difficult living on Social Security checks, Sanders said they won't go to a food bank.



Gilbert Escalante loads a food box in a car for Karl Lipkemen, of Phoenix, provided by the Treasure Box at the Church of the Beatitudes in Phoenix.

"We've been married for 52 years and this is the first time we've found ourselves in this situation," she said. "There are people who are worse off than we are. I wouldn't take food out of their mouths."

The Treasure Box is a division of Good Source Solutions, a food-distribution company with clients such as non-profits, higher education institutions and government feeding programs. Good Source Solutions uses its bulk purchasing power to buy surplus food from name-brand manufacturers at discount. They then sell that frozen food in prepackaged boxes at lower-than-retail prices.

Harvest Christian Fellowship Pastor Michael Salman said the Treasure Box is a blessing. The northwest Phoenix church has participated in the program for several months and bought a freezer to store extra food boxes.

"We were trying to do outreach, find a way to participate, to be a help," said Salman. "This is perfect. The food is frozen and it's not perishable. It's something that has some shelf life."

Church coordinators say participants appreciate that the program works for families, seniors and others who are budgeting. One box can feed a family of four for a week, or an elderly person for a month.

The program works by visiting the Treasure Box Web site, reviewing the menu for the coming month, ordering and paying online. Some host sites allow individuals to pay in person, but only before the order deadline. Three weeks later, typically the last Saturday of the month, the boxed food is delivered to a host site in the Valley.

In five months, more than 30 houses of worship and community organizations in the metropolitan Phoenix area have signed up, said Koni Gould, Treasure Box Arizona Representative.

"Our first month we had 40 boxes coming over on the truck," Gould said. "Last month we had 3,100 boxes. It's such a great bargain."

Didi Charlesworth, Treasure Box site coordinator at Calvary Chapel Central Phoenix, said more than 200 people come each month to pick up boxes.

"We do it because it's a good value," Charlesworth said. "You don't have to be in need. I like that. It makes sense to me."

The deadline to order a box is Jan. 17. Pickup is Jan. 30.