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Cop aims to feed hungry

Officer collecting food for Salvation Army's pantry

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Perry

Written by Mark Caudill News Journal

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MANSFIELD -- City police Officer Mark Perry saw a need.

While on drill duty at the 179th Airlift Wing of the Ohio Air National Guard last weekend, Perry heard about a shortage of food at the Salvation Army.

He decided to do something about it. Perry organized a city food drive that started Wednesday, challenging fellow city employees and area residents to contribute nonperishable items. Boxes are set out on the first- and second-floor lobbies in the city building, as well inside the Park Avenue East entrance.

Perry initially planned to donate a portion of each paycheck to the Salvation Army, but thought that might not be enough to make a difference and came up with the idea for a food drive.

"I thought this would be a good opportunity to do something in a bigger way," he said. "God calls us to help the needy."

Ashantia Ginn, a social worker and office manager at the Salvation Army, said donations have tailed off since the holidays. She said the agency has doubled what it normally orders from the Cleveland Food Bank.

She appreciates the contributions of Perry and his fellow city employees.

"We're not alone in this effort," Ginn said.

Needed items include tuna or other canned meat, macaroni and cheese, soup, peanut butter, rice, cereal, fruits and vegetables,



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oatmeal and boxed meals such as Hamburger Helper.

"I asked them what they needed, and they said everything," Perry said.

The Mansfield police officer knew he had to act fast.

"This is a pay week for a lot of people," Perry said. "I thought it would be a good time to get it going."

Perry's 13-year-old daughter Jasmine got into the act by designing a flier to promote the food drive. Mayor Tim Theaker predicted his employees would jump in to help.

"It just shows that the city employees step up to the plate and help the community," he said.

That was Perry's goal.

"If we pull together, we can make a big dent in the crisis," he said.

The Salvation Army's food pantry is open from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The address is 47 S. Main St. People are asked to bring identification and a piece of mail to show their address.

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