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# Volunteers collect 90 tons of food for charities

## Volunteers collect 90 tons of food and baby supplies

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In 11 years of conducting charity food drives, Saturday marked the first time Greg Weinstein encountered rain.

It didn't deter him or about 250 volunteers in Spartanburg and more than 1,500 total in the Upstate and Columbia areas from collecting 90 tons of food and baby supplies during a "Food from the Heart" food drive to provide local food banks and the Carolina Pregnancy Center with much needed supplies.

Weinstein led First Baptist North Spartanburg through that mission last July, when volunteers and people able to donate rounded up 38 tons of supplies in one day. Weinstein called Saturday's event a "test drive" for an effort he's hoping will go statewide in the fall. Weinstein thinks 10,000 volunteers will be needed in the fall to guide all 46 of the state's counties through a drive.

"Our objective is to bless not just one organization," Weinstein said, adding that food banks are meeting needs but could use help gathering supplies to ease their distribution efforts.

Weinstein and his wife, Candi, and a couple of folks in the Bible study group at Saddleback Church in Southern California started the food drive. The Weinsteins have been married 15 years and renew their marriage vows in a different state each year.



*Mike Bonner/mike.bonner@shj.com*

Several groups from First Baptist North Spartanburg spent their rainy Saturday morning collecting food from shoppers at the Ingles on East Main Street in Spartanburg. Here Marian Johnston hands a bag of food to Lucille Wilkins.

They decided to relocate to Spartanburg after renewing their vows at Landrum's Red Horse Inn and led their new home church through the July drive in what Greg Weinstein said was an "awesome experience" and the largest first-time drive he's ever led.

"I didn't have any apprehension (about Saturday's drive)," he said. "I knew what was going to transpire. It's given me hope that what we want to do in the fall is achievable."

The premise is fairly simple, but productive practice helps the logistical planning and execution and growth of the mission. Volunteers greet shoppers at entrances to grocery stores and hand participants a list of items that would help area organizations. A shopper can select any type of nonperishable food, hygiene product or diapers and place them in a special red bag. The red bags are loaded into trucks and delivered to agencies.

Leslie McDowell of Campobello bought some weekly groceries at Ingles, 8650 Asheville Highway, and participated in the drive.

"It's very important. I want people to have food," McDowell said. "It's awful nice for them to stand in this weather and do that."

The store was one of 13 in Spartanburg County - six Bi-Los, six Ingles and a Food Lion - to participate in the drive.

Weinstein and First Baptist North Spartanburg associate pastor Al Phillips said stores were a little skeptical last summer, but sales jumped on the day of the drive. Phillips said some stores ordered extra quantities of some items and arranged end-cap display shelves to help participants locate the requested items.

"I'm very happy with the participation," Phillips said. "Our goal is to show the difference that Jesus Christ makes in our life."

Weinstein said people from age 5 to 105 are eligible to participate in the drive, but his 10-year-old daughter, Paige, started when she was 4 and wants to train other youth. He said the program satisfies a desire that people have to participate in a service project.

"I have a strong sense what's happening (Saturday) is the beginning" of building a statewide success and providing a model that can be "duplicated across the country," he said.

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