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One church's big yearly food drive brings supplies to a growing number of needy homes.

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By: [Justin Leighty](#)

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ELKHART -- Members of Granger Community Church provided food and personal items by the ton to help people in the Elkhart community Saturday.

It was part of a huge annual undertaking that covers 23 sites from here through South Bend. All told, the church raised a couple hundred thousand dollars, said Jeff Bell, Elkhart campus pastor for GCC.

That bought 3,080 boxes of food to distribute throughout the area, said Rodney Alabaugh, assistant manager of Feed the Children in Elkhart. Each box held enough non-perishable items to feed a family of four for a week, Alabaugh said. They also distributed an equal number of boxes of personal items. All told, GCC estimated the weight of everything at 185,000 pounds.

This was the first year the event used an Elkhart distribution site, the church's new satellite campus at Encore Cinemas on Cassopolis Street.

In Elkhart it involved:

* Two semi trucks full of food the church purchased from Feed The Children and then packed last month (the entire operation distributed seven truckloads, or some 185,000 pounds of food).

* Roughly 200 volunteers who turned out in the snow to empty the semis in the Encore parking lot.

* Eight box trucks or trailers pulled by pickup trucks, which the volunteers packed with the food from the semis (altogether, 27 smaller trucks and trailers were donated for use in GCC's Food Drop Saturday).

* Seven locations that received the food. Food pantries like Church Community Services, God's Kitchen and the Faith Mission got food, but volunteers also took it door to door in Washington Gardens, Cornerstone Apartments, Holiday Village Mobile Home Park and the area of Malcolm Drive and Moffat Lane.

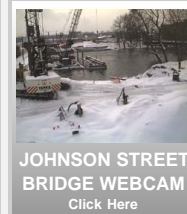
Bell, the pastor, said the drive came from "a lot of generous people who love the community and want to tangibly show people they're loved." He said giving was down this year specifically for the event, but said the church made up the difference out of its budget.

Caption: One church's big yearly food drive brings supplies to a growing

LOCAL WEATHER

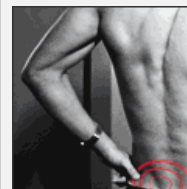
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Benefits



The Elkhart Truth

Kyle Shoemaker, a volunteer who helped pass boxes from semi to truck Saturday, said it's "a great way to serve our community and be the hands and feet of God's work."

Todd Ruth was working nearby with his 4-year-old son, Carter. "For myself and my family it's important to learn, in my opinion, to help others," he said.

Doug Anderson, who manages Washington Gardens for the Elkhart Housing Authority, said it's a great outreach. "I think what they're doing for the Elkhart area is just awesome. Some people, they don't need a sermon," he said.

Washington Gardens residents Brittany Frazier and José Garcia were grateful to get the food, especially in such bad weather. "We were just talking about it, too," Garcia said. "We were wondering if they'd get out in the snow. It was a big surprise," he said.

Bell said he hopes the snow just showed people how much the outreach means to the church.

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