

Heroes Come to Food Bank's Aid



Antonia & Al Valentini

The Rescuers

In his life, Al Valentini has been a policeman and a firefighter, and his wife, Antonia, adds with a chuckle that at one point he was both at the same time.

"He's definitely big on the rescue stuff," Antonia said. "He was born to wear the cape and tights. That's just kind of who he is."

So when the Mukilteo couple read about the ACRS' Food Bank burglaries in the newspaper, faster than a speeding bullet, they knew what to do.

The couple, who own an electrical contracting business, donated a security system for the food bank, something it had never had. It's a gift worth over \$850, and they also plan to cover the monthly monitoring service, which typically cost at least \$30 a month.

If anyone now tries to break into the food bank, a loud, piercing alarm will go off and a security service will be alerted.

"We just decided we needed to help them out," Antonia explained. "It's ridiculous that people would try ripping off those who are trying to do good things. This just seemed like the

right thing to do."

The Reluctant Hero

Warner Lew says he didn't do anything special. In fact, the 50-year-old fleet manager for Icicle Seafoods isn't at all sure his donation of two truckloads of food and frozen fish during the food bank's hour of need is even noteworthy.

For years, Warner has been bringing surplus frozen fish, along with food left in the ships' galley to the food bank. Every time vessels returned from a season of processing seafood in Alaska, he'd make a stop at the food bank. The latest drop-off simply happened to coincide with the food bank theft, he said.

"We really just got lucky," he said. "The timing was good."

But although he downplays his contributions, it's clear that he feels a sense of connection to the agency that his father, the late Raymond Lew, had served as board president.

"The food bank is always at the top of my list of donations," Warner said. "It's close to home."

Girl Power on Mercer Island

After hearing about the food bank burglary, the members of Mercer Island's Girl Scout Troop #1690 knew they wanted to do something to help. But barred by their organization from raising money for other agencies, they did the next best thing.

In early February, despite the winter chill that followed January's snowstorms, six girls ranging in age from 12 to 13 years old, set up tables in front of a QFC and asked customers



Girl Scout Troop #1690

to purchase foods that could be donated to the food bank.

Within hours, they had collected bags of rice, bottles of soy sauce and cans of tuna. Troop Leader Pat Wynn said they collected enough to fill the back of her station wagon.

"They're just wonderful kids," Pat said. "They're kind and warm and optimistic. And they were very impressed with the amount of food they collected and the generosity of the neighborhood."

Pat, whose daughter is a member of the troop, said that as her girls have grown up, they've become less interested in earning badges, and more interested in community service.

The food drive, she says, may be the start of an ongoing relationship with the food bank. Already the scouts talk of doing more volunteer work at the food bank, perhaps helping to sort food, or maybe another food drive.

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