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HELP OUT FOR HALF OFF: NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK AND POINT DEFIANCE ZOO TEAM UP TO HELP THE HUNGRY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON WITH A SPECIAL FOOD DRIVE NOV. 4-20

Visitors who bring two or more food items to Northwest Trek or Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium will receive half off general admission – and they'll be making a much-needed donation to the Emergency Food Network

Each visitor who brings two or more items of non-perishable food to Northwest Trek Wildlife Park near Eatonville or Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma will receive half-off general admission from Nov. 4-20.



The food drive by the sister zoos will benefit Pierce County's non-profit Emergency Food Network, just as the calendar turns toward Thanksgiving and the year-end holidays beyond. Both zoos are facilities of Metro Parks Tacoma.

The special offer applies to adults and children.

Visitors should bring shelf-stable food items or family necessities such as canned tuna, chicken and salmon; peanut butter; canned stews; canned or dried fruits and vegetables; baby food and infant formula according to the Emergency Food Network.

Additional information on the most needed items is located at www.efoodnet.org.

Emergency Food Network provides 16 million pounds of healthy and nutritious food each year to some 70 food banks, hot meal sites and shelters for distribution to people in need, according to the organization's website.

The need is huge. More than 1.4 million visits are made to food banks in Pierce County each year. And when someone walks into a food bank in need, he or she leaves with enough food for nine meals.

Last year, a Help Out for Half Off food drive at Northwest Trek made a big dent in the demand.

Generous visitors donated a whopping ton and a half-plus – a total of 3,504 pounds – of cans, boxes and jars of food.

The food donated by the wildlife park's visitors provided 2,804 meals to people in need during the 2015 holiday season, according to Merrit Reed, coordinator of volunteer activities for Emergency Food Network. That's enough to provide three meals a day to eight families of four for a month, she said.

"We are extremely pleased to once again team up with our amazing visitors to combat hunger in Pierce County," said Northwest Trek Deputy Director Alan Varsik. "And we are thrilled that our Metro Parks Tacoma team of Northwest Trek and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is doubling that effort for 2016. Our community supports our sister zoos and conservation efforts all year. It's a pleasure that we can help families out with an admission discount while they, at the same time, aid their Pierce County neighbors with crucial food donations."

Emergency Food Network bins for food-donation collections will be located at Northwest Trek and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium from Nov. 4 through Nov. 20.

Northwest Trek is open to visitors from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Fridays through Sundays at this time of year. That means, visitors may bring in food for half-off general admission at the wildlife park on these dates:

- Friday, Nov. 4
- Saturday, Nov. 5
- Sunday, Nov. 6
- Friday, Nov. 11
- Sunday, Nov. 12
- Sunday, Nov. 13
- Friday, Nov. 18
- Saturday, Nov. 19
- Sunday, Nov. 20

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays (closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays) during this time. That means, visitors can Help Out for Half-Off at the zoo on these dates:

- Friday, Nov. 4
- Saturday, Nov. 5
- Sunday, Nov. 6
- Monday, Nov. 7
- Thursday, Nov. 10
- Friday, Nov. 11
- Saturday, Nov. 12
- Sunday, Nov. 13
- Monday, Nov. 14
- Thursday, Nov. 17
- Friday, Nov. 18
- Saturday, Nov. 19
- Sunday, Nov. 20

The Help Out for Half Off promotion may not be combined with any other discounts or coupons and applies only to general admission prices.

Every visit to Northwest Trek comes with a narrated tram ride through the 435-acre Free-Roaming Area, which is home to American bison, Roosevelt elk, bighorn sheep, moose, deer and other animals.

In addition, visitors can walk forested pathways past natural exhibits inhabited by native Northwest animals such as a grizzly bear, two black bears, wolves, foxes, a cougar, Canada lynx, river otters, a beaver, fishers, owls and others. And the new \$1.9 million Kids' Trek nature-inspired play area is a magnet for children from toddlers to tweens.

Visitors to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium have the opportunity to see and learn about a variety of land and aquatic animals, including polar bears, Pacific walruses, a male California sea lion, Sumatran tigers, Asian elephants, a months-old muskox calf, colorful jellyfish and mesmerizing sharks. In addition, they can touch stingrays and small sharks, explore a tide pool environment, feed goats and see hundreds of other animals.

For more information about Northwest Trek or Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, go to www.nwtrek.org or www.pdza.org.

To get additional information about Emergency Food Network, go to www.efoodnet.org.

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Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma and is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

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