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THANKS TO OUR VISITORS: GUESTS AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO AND NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK TEAM UP TO DONATE 1,471 POUNDS OF FOOD TO PEOPLE IN NEED

TACOMA, Wash. – Visitors to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park donated a combined 1,471 pounds of food to the Emergency Food Network during the just-concluded Help Out for Half-Off drive.

The special event was conducted Nov. 3-19 at the sister zoos – Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park near Eatonville. Both are facilities of Metro Parks Tacoma.

Visitors who brought in two or more shelf-stable items of food were offered half off general admission prices at each zoo.

The nearly 1,500 pounds of food is impressive.

It's enough to provide 1,176 meals to hungry people in Pierce County, said Steve Dunkelberger, community engagement coordinator for the Emergency Food Network.

Visitors at the wildlife park and zoo brought in food by the armload; in many cases, children came to the ticket windows carrying cans of vegetables and soups, jars of baby food and boxes of stuffing, pasta and other items.

Emergency Food Network, based in Pierce County, says food drives like Help Out for Half-Off play a crucial role in helping the agency meet the needs of residents.

The non-profit agency provides nearly 15 million pounds of healthy food to 68 food pantries, hot meal sites and shelters each year. More than 1.3 million visits are made to food banks in Pierce County annually by families and individuals who need a helping hand.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium visitors helped the cause by bringing a total of 908 pounds of food, Dunkelberger said. Northwest Trek visitors brought in 563 pounds.

Northwest Trek is open from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday of Thanksgiving Weekend.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is closed on Thanksgiving Day but then open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays for regular daytime visits to see animals.

Zoolights, the zoo's annual holiday lights extravaganza, begins on Friday, Nov. 24, illuminating the night sky with more than 650,000 lights, many of them included in animal-shaped figurines. Zoolights hours are 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. nightly, with a one-night closure on Dec. 24.

For more information, go to www.nwtrek.org and www.pdza.org.

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