



Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2009

Walmart holds food drive, donates goods

Walmart said it would hold a community canned food drive at its Merced store and will announce a donation of \$2,500 worth of canned goods to the United Way of Merced County and the Merced County Food Bank.

Separately, opponents of the proposed Walmart distribution center said they planned to hold a rally at 10 a.m. today at a shopping center at Yosemite Park Way and Parsons.

The canned food drive kickoff will take place at 10 a.m. today in the parking lot of the Merced Walmart store at 3055 Loughborough Drive. Flip Hassett, executive director of the United Way of Merced County, and Israel Rodriguez, operations manager of the Merced County Food Bank, will attend.

"Walmart has been a longstanding community partner that understands the importance of giving back to the communities they serve," said Rodriguez.

During the canned and dry food drive, a Walmart diesel-electric hybrid truck will be on display for customers to learn more about Walmart's progress in building a more sustainable trucking fleet. Customers can look at the truck's engine and ask questions of the Walmart truck driver.

The truck, based at Walmart's distribution center in Apple Valley and nicknamed "Shrek" by its drivers because of its bright green cab, is one of five trucks with diesel-electric hybrid power systems the company said it's testing to increase its fleet efficiency and develop a more sustainable trucking fleet.

For more information about Walmart's testing of hybrid trucks and alternative fuels, visit www.walmartstores.com.

The anti-Walmart group said it plans to "traverse the neighborhood of 3,000 homes" near the proposed distribution center. It said its walkers would warn residents about "the increased pollution" allegedly coming from trucks entering and leaving the proposed center.

The group also argued that property values of homes nearby the proposed center "are expected to sink further" because of its size.

The Merced Planning Commission has scheduled the first of a series of hearings Aug. 19. The Merced City Council will vote on the issue Sept. 21.