

Plano Early Lions Hear About “ReThinking Hunger”

By Jack Durnin, PR Director for Plano Early Lions Club

At their recent meeting, **Plano Early Lions Club** members listened to a presentation by Colleen Brinkmann, the Chief Philanthropy Officer of the **North Texas Food Bank (NTFB)**. She discussed the “**ReThinking Hunger**” project. Its goal is to find ways to bring better solutions to the problem of feeding the increasing number of people who are in need of adequate nutrition. NTFB has also been concentrating on healthy foods and avoiding snack and high sugar foods. The ‘healthy’ foods include fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as more nutritious products like those with higher protein and fiber content.

The NTFB is supported by many local churches, as well as supermarket chains, and local food distributors. Funds are sought to supplement food donations and for operating expenses. About 94% of monetary donations go toward fulfilling NTFB’s mission with only 6% used for



Colleen Brinkmann,

overhead. One of their programs provides children with a backpack containing items such as fruit and food each Friday afternoon during the school year which helps them get through the weekend. The food provides 75% of their food requirements for the weekend. Included are items such as chicken, and tuna, some of which don’t need heating or tools to prepare. Backpacks are returned on Monday. Colleen told the Lions that some schools with a high number of NTFB clients see the highest attendance figures on Friday and Monday. She related a

story of one student who asked his counselor each time he saw her on Friday if his backpack would be there for him. The counselor kept reassuring him it would be there. He was so excited to receive his backpack after school on Friday that he hugged his counselor so hard that she was breathless. Another student was heard to say “I love the smell of apples” one Friday because there were usually apples in the backpacks.

Each day, NTFB provides 92,000 meals, which is equivalent to providing meals to a sold-out Cotton Bowl event. This highlights the fact that 1 in 4 in the Greater Dallas area is unsure of their next meal. That’s quite an astonishing figure for an area that prides itself in being economically ahead of many areas in the United States. With our high concentration of Fortune 500 corporation headquarters, it seems that this problem can be reduced.

The Lions learned that NTFB is a distribution hub for many organizations. They support 300 non-profit distribution centers which in turn support 1000 food distribution sites throughout the area where those in need can obtain food. Brinkmann pointed out NTFB regularly sends trucks to McKinney and other locations outside the immediate Dallas area because they are within the area served by NTFB. These shipments include milk, eggs, fruits and fresh vegetables.

In conclusion, Brinkmann urged the Lions to support the NTFB in any way they can. She said she would love to see a bunch of yellow Lions vests at their food distribution locations. Volunteers are always needed to sort and pack food boxes for the various food distribution centers. Of course, Saturday shifts get filled up quickly. Several of the Lions are retired, so she may get her wish.

For additional information, please go to http://www.ntfb.org/gi_volunteer.cfm to find volunteer information about NTFB and www.planolions.org for Plano Early Lions Club information and contacts.