ACAP’s Cereal Drive collects more than 1,000 boxes of cereal for County kids and food cupboards

PRESQUE ISLE – Aroostook County Action Program’s annual cereal drive resulted in more than 1,000 boxes of cereal that the agency will give to children at each of their Early Care and Education Centers throughout the region, with the remaining boxes going to stock ACAP food cupboards.

“We are fortunate to collect enough cereal not only to supply every child within our childcare centers with a box of cereal before the holidays, but to also stock our Community cupboards located in Presque Isle and Houlton,” said Heidi Rackliffe, ACAP family coach. “This allows us to provide support for folks who aren’t able to access their local food pantry, but still have that food barrier. Our cupboards offer an alternative for folks who are unable to make it to a pantry on the days they are open or perhaps have already utilized their allowance of food for that month. Hunger is a large issue and one that takes multiple creative approaches to solving. We hope our cupboards are just a small piece of the puzzle.”

Beginning near the first of November, each year for the past several years, staff at ACAP have held an internal cereal drive. Employees bring in boxes of cereal to distribute to children attending one of ACAP’s seven Early Care and Education Centers from Dyer Brook and Houlton, all the way up to Fort Kent. Three years ago, ACAP’s cereal drive became their creative entry into the St. Apollonia Dental Clinic’s Festival of Trees. Staff used the boxes to construct a large “Community Giving Tree.” People placing their tickets into the tree’s bucket were showing their support and awareness of hunger in Aroostook County and participating local grocers pledged to match a certain number of tickets collected at the Festival with additional boxes of cereal.

This year, ACAP staff collected 531 boxes to build their Community Giving Tree. Festival of Trees goers placed 977 tickets into the bucket. From across the County, 16 grocers participated in matching 502 boxes of cereal, bringing the total number of boxes collected to 1,033 to help feed the hungry in Aroostook County.

Participating grocers included: Andy’s IGA, Star City/Hillside/Mars Hill IGA, Grave’s Shop & Save, Aroostook Foods, Hannaford in Caribou, Country Farms Market in Easton, Walmart in Houlton, Saucier’s Shurfine, Hannaford in Houlton, Oakfield Thriftway, Save-A-Lot in Presque Isle and Caribou, Steaks and Stuff, and John’s Shurfine in Fort Kent.

Shannon Hill, of ACAP’s Energy and Housing staff, coordinated the Community Giving Tree project this year. Once each of the children in ACAP’s center receive a box to bring home with them during the winter break between the Christmas holiday and New Year’s Day, the remaining boxes will stock the food cupboards at ACAP sites in Presque Isle and Houlton. Cereal is an ideal food for the cupboards in cold, often below-freezing weather, when people are most vulnerable to hunger.
“I am truly amazed at the generosity of our ACAP employees and the local grocers that made this event a success. As a first year coordinator, I didn’t know what to expect. However this year we received our largest outside donation of cereal so far,” said Hill. “I am already looking forward to next year and planning how to make it even better. The real success story here is Aroostook County residents taking caring of their friends and neighbors.”

ACAP provides the people of Aroostook County with services and resources that help individuals and families achieve greater economic independence. As a leader, or in partnership with others, ACAP provides guidance to the community in responding to emerging human needs in the areas of community health, early care and education, energy and housing, and workforce development services. For more information on ACAP, or to make a tax-deductible contribution, please contact the agency at 771 Main Street, on the web at www.acap-me.org, or by calling 764-3721.