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## Oregon Tuna Classic delivers in the clutch

*Allen Moody  
Headlight-Herald Staff*

GARABALDI - The Oregon Tuna Classic has a history of helping the people of Oregon, and this year was certainly no exception. Tournament officials were able to donate \$46,000 to the Oregon Food Bank, as well as 13,300 pounds of tuna, which was given to food banks in Tillamook, Coos Bay and Astoria.

"It's been our best year yet," said Oregon Tuna Classic Vice Chairman Bud Hosner.

The amount of the donations to the food banks couldn't come at a better time, as demand is much greater than in previous years.

"The need is real high," said Cari Clifton, program coordinator for the Regional Food Bank of Tillamook County. "It started hitting in October and we're seeing about double the amount of people and the number of boxes going out of the pantry since September. Tillamook Food Bank usually does 30 to 40 boxes and they did 88 (Thursday). There's new people who are accessing on a daily basis."

Clifton said the economy was the primary reason for the increase in requests for assistance and that this wasn't simply a case of the usual increase that occurs near the holidays.

"I've been around for three years and normally there would be a steady increase, but this isn't steady," she said. "It's really hitting everybody. All the programs are getting hit."

"If you go to the grocery store and buy two items that's \$10. And you have seniors who are living on \$800 a month and they get \$10 in food stamps. If they use the Oregon prescription card that just came out and they're on low-income housing, their housing goes up because their prescription costs go down."



*Cari Clifton, program coordinator of the Regional Food Bank of Tillamook County, looks on as Levi Johnson, warehouse manager, loads boxes of canned tuna*

The tone of the Oregon Tuna Classic was set in the tournament's first year, when it was named the I Fish for Food Tuna Tournament. The winner of the event, Dick Crossley of Tillamook Country Smoker, was entitled to reimbursement of his expenses used to catch the fish, but elected to donate his prize back to the Oregon Food Bank.

Fishermen caught 2,100 pounds of tuna for the Oregon Food Bank that first year in 2005 and tournament officials have been able to increase their donations every year, a trend Hosner hopes will continue.

"We hope to increase next year's donation by 50-percent," Hosner said. "Our sponsorships will be down because of the economy, but the fishermen have really embraced the event."

The tournament wouldn't be nearly the success it has become without the collective efforts of a number of people and organizations, including the Tillamook Bay Boathouse, which Hosner and Clifton both wanted to thank.

"We simply did the canning," said Darus Peake, of the Tillamook Bay Boathouse. "The Oregon Tuna Classic and Ducks Unlimited all chipped in. What we did was the canning at cost to support the food bank and the Oregon Tuna Classic deserves all the credit for all this. Dick Crossley and Bud Hossner did a fantastic job."

Peake said the fishermen deserve a lot of credit for their support of the tournament.

"They spend their own money for fuel and most of the time the awards and top trophies are given right back to the food bank," he said.

The first event of the tournament series, which was scheduled for Newport in July, was canceled because of rough weather conditions, but the hungry in Lincoln County will feel the benefit of the fishermen's generosity, as the other three food banks are all donating a portion of their receipts from the tournament series to Lincoln County Food Share.

Two-thirds of the 4,900 pounds of tuna donated to the Regional Food Bank of Tillamook County will stay right here and Clifton said that's a huge boost for the community.

"It's going to help a lot," she said. "We give to six emergency programs and 15 supplemental programs. It's going to feed a lot of people."