

Star Advertiser

Nonprofit's new trucks help feed more needy

By Gary Chun

Honolulu Star Advertiser July 7, 2012

Although an official blessing of Aloha Harvest's two new delivery trucks won't be held until Friday, the vehicles have already hit the road, making daily deliveries of much-needed donated food to dozens of social service agencies.

The 2013 Isuzu 16-foot commercial refrigerator trucks were put into service at the end of June, replacing one truck that racked up 250,000 miles before giving out in October, and a van that started off as a six month rental, but was used for almost four years, according to Executive Director Ku'ulei Williams.

"We've been looking forward to getting these trucks for a long time, and they really represent a new, next step up for Aloha Harvest in operations," she said.



The new vehicles will allow the organization to deliver an additional 50,000 plus pounds of food each year, Williams said.

Since 1999, Aloha Harvest in Kaimuki has been gathering prepared and perishable food from distributors, restaurants, caterers, hotels and supermarkets and delivering it free of charge to 150 social service agencies on Oahu with a combined clientele of 70,000 people.

With the help of separate \$40,000 grants from the HMSA Foundation and Omidyar Ohana Fund (the latter through the Hawaii Community Foundation) more than \$120,000 was raised to help purchase the trucks.

Williams said more than 8 million pounds of food has been donated to Aloha Harvest by food-related businesses over the years. Instead of being thrown away, leftover prepared and perishable food is either picked up the same day or the next, after overnight storage by donors, and immediately delivered to agencies. (Aloha Harvest does not have storage facilities.)

Besides regular pickup and delivery routes, Williams said, the agency's five drivers accommodate unscheduled donations.

"Like today we had to pick up over 200 cases of milk. Some days there could anything from five pans of food left over from a catered event to three pallets of frozen food to pick up and distribute," she said.

Aloha Harvest delivers to anywhere from three to 12 agencies a day. "They describe us as like being Santa Claus, bringing presents," Williams said.

Beneficiaries include Child & Family Service, the Salvation Army, the Institute for Human Services, River of Life Mission, Hale Kipa, Makana o Ke Akua, the U.S. Veterans Initiative, the Waikiki Health center and churches around the island that are serving meals to a growing number of needy individuals and families.

"We fill a vital niche in the community. We've gotten support letters from those we help, saying that they're so grateful for what we do. Because we give them food free of charge, it can help by saving money that can go to other needs in their program," Williams said.

"Our service has grown quite a bit over the years. The goal, obviously, is that one day there will be no needy and homeless people. But until then it takes all of us to meet the needs of the community," she said.

Contact Aloha Harvest at 537-6945 or visit alohaharvest.org