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'Helping Hams' campaign kicks off for families in need

Fresno State President Joseph I. Castro and student body president Moses Menchaca kicked off a new campaign, Helping Hams, today at the Rue and Gwen Gibson Farm Market for families in need this holiday season.

The campaign replaces the popular Give a Gobbler drive due to a turkey shortage this year, said Dr. Charles Boyer, dean of the Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology.



Dr. Boyer

"Because of uncertain feed costs and hot weather, fewer turkeys are available for the holidays," Boyer said. "Featuring hams is another way for us to showcase a different part of agriculture while making a difference."

No turkeys are available for purchase at the Gibson Farm Market this year, said Nina Palomino, store manager. But prepackaged holiday hams are in stock and the tradition, started seven years ago with turkeys, continues with the aid of the Associated Students Inc. and a new donation strategy that also encourages students to participate.

The campaign runs through Dec. 18 with a goal of 150 hams, ranging from \$20 to \$35 each. The Bulldog Pantry will distribute the hams on Dec. 20 to families in need who live near campus and in the El Dorado Park neighborhood. Hams also will be given to other local charities, as determined by Bulldog Pantry.

Donors may purchase a whole ham or give in increments of \$5. The drive will be tracked with a "Helping Ham gauge" — a poster of a thermometer. The Bulldog Pantry's Smile Center and the El Dorado Boys and Girls Club created piglet ornaments to affix to the thermometer every time a \$25 contribution is made.

One major donation will be announced today from RCO Ag Credit, which is giving \$2,000 to the cause, Boyer said.

President Castro commended the students for their support and encouraged the community to join in the spirit of RCO Ag Credit.

"I know we still face tough times in our economy and students have many expenses but it is important that we find ways to help those less fortunate even when it is difficult for us," he said. "If we each do one small part, together we can make a big difference for those in need that in turn helps our community in general.

"We appeal to the entire university community and the general public to contribute to this very worthy cause to help make sure the hungry in our community are fed this holiday season," Castro said.

The switch from turkeys also follows the recent pardoning of "Pepper", a 17-week-old, 36-pound tom turkey spared by California State University Chancellor Timothy P. White. ASI held the special event to kickoff to the Helping Hams campaign when the chancellor visited campus on Nov. 13.

Donations may be made at the Gibson Farm Market located at 5368 N. Chestnut Ave., between Shaw and Barstow avenues. Checks should be made payable to the Agricultural Foundation (mailing address 2385 E. Barstow Ave., Mailstop AG 85, Fresno, CA 93740).

For more information, contact Ashleigh Rocker, programs and volunteer coordinator for ASI, at arocker@csufresno.edu or 559.278.7703.

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