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Needy veterans on the rise

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September 30, 2010

BY LAUREN FITZPATRICK

A group of veterans made 115 food baskets last Thanksgiving they delivered to fellow vets and their families.

This year, the collection hasn't even started and the number of requests for help already numbers 400, according to one of the organizers.

"It's not just the economically challenged areas. It's literally all around," said Mike Cozzi, of Crestwood.

And so the Veterans Outreach Program of Illinois will collect all kinds of nonperishables, not just Thanksgiving items, starting Friday and continuing until Nov. 19.

"One hundred percent of what we get goes to vets and their families in times of need," Cozzi said.

Collection boxes will pop up throughout the region - at schools, stores and pubs.

More than 100 volunteers will descend on VFW Post 6863 in Summit on Nov. 19 to sort the collection and pack up baskets. The next morning, a turkey will be added to each basket before it's delivered to homes.

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Cozzi is still looking for volunteers to help make deliveries on Nov. 20.

With the economy still in the toilet, Veterans Outreach is seeing what local food pantries have been experiencing in recent years - lots of hungry people.

COLLECTION SITES

Bobby McGees Good Times Pub, 10139 S. Harlem Ave., Chicago Ridge

Cuzins Tavern & Pizza, 17704 Oak Park Ave., Tinley Park

Flapjacks Pancake House, 4830 W. 111th St., Oak Lawn

Johnny's Wee Nee Wagon, 15743 Crawford Ave., Markham

Midas, 14224 S. Cicero Ave., Crestwood

Midas, 14810 S. LaGrange Road, Orland Park

Midas, 11108 S. Southwest Highway, Palos Hills

Midas, 8333 S. Harlem Ave., Bridgeview

Pazzo Salon and Spa, 10292 S. 78th Ave., Palos Hills

Southsides Bar, 11860 S. Cicero Ave., Alsip

Texas Roadhouse, 18345 LaGrange Road, Tinley Park

Veterans Outreach Program of Illinois, 5038 W. 127th St., Alsip

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