

Butler County continues aid to tornado victims

Public agencies, nonprofits helping Dayton area.

By Michael D. Pitman
Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD – More than a month after a string of tornadoes caused catastrophic damage, Butler County organizations are continuing to raise money and provide aid to the Dayton area, which officials say underlines the support needed from throughout the region after such an event.

The Butler County Emergency Management Agency and the Sheriff's office aided emergency crews, and community groups and municipalities pitched in to donate items. The city of Hamilton donated all of its city bottled water on hand, and about 40 members of the Miami University football team and coaching staff aided with cleanup.

The county continues to help the Dayton area, which is still trying to recover from the devastation.

"We're in close communication with (The Dayton Foodbank) in assessing the



Dan Grabowski (left), Fairfield Food Pantry; Lee Truesdale, The Dayton Foodbank; Bill Woeste, pantry trustee; and Carl Wriston, Pantry trustee approved a donation to The Foodbank. CONTRIBUTED

need," said Terry Perdue, executive director of the Shared Harvest Foodbank in Fairfield.

Shared Harvest arranged to have two truckloads of food sent to The Dayton Foodbank, one about three weeks ago and a second about 10 days ago.

Also, last Saturday, Shared Harvest arranged a pop-up pantry at the Miami County Veterans Services Building in Troy, where a crew distributed boxes of frozen and dry products for people impacted by the Memorial Day tornadoes.

"Our network is very efficient and supportive of one another," Perdue said. "We pull together resources, as we see us as one large community that works together."

The Fairfield Food Pantry also supported the tornado victims. Pantry trustees approved a \$1,000 donation to The Foodbank in memory of Nancye Graeser, a pantry "angel" who recently died. The funds will help cover the cost to provide food and other necessary supplies to people affected by the tornadoes, said Judy Dirkson, trustee and co-founder of the pantry.

"Nancye would be so pleased to know her kindness and generosity to us is being shared in this way," she said.

Nearly 100 Panera Bread locations across Southwest and Central Ohio, the Miami Valley and Northern Kentucky participated in the "Chip In for Dayton" fundraising campaign, which netted \$50,000 in contributions to the Greater Dayton Disaster Relief Fund at The Dayton Foundation.

HOW TO HELP

The Dayton Foundation: The foundation created the Greater Dayton Disaster Relief Fund and contributions can be mailed to The Dayton Foundation, 40 N. Main Street, Suite 500, Dayton, Ohio 45423 or made online at www.daytonfoundation.org/disasterrelief.html.

The Dayton Foodbank: Financial donations, can be mailed to 56 Armor Place, Dayton, Ohio 45423 or online at thefoodbankdayton.org/donate.

The American Red Cross: Make a \$10 donation by visiting RedCross.org, calling 1-800-REDCROSS or texting the word "RedCROSS" to 90999.

Gov. Mike DeWine declared a state of emergency following the tornado strikes, and President Donald Trump declared a disaster area, allowing the region to receive Federal Emergency Management Agency money.

Lora Davenport, The Dayton Foodbank advocacy and programs manager, said the Shared Harvest and Fairfield Food Pantry donations are needed, especially because full recovery from the tornadoes could take some families a few years.

"We're treating this like a marathon," she said. "For at least a couple of years to come, we expect to still see people who've been affected by the tornadoes."

Support has come from far across Ohio and outside the state, Davenport said.

"It's been a rough month for a lot of people in the area, but it's really made us proud to be living in a community where everyone comes together and supports each other," she said. "And our neighbors aren't just living next door; they're across the state."

Davenport said they're "thankful" for Shared Harvest's recent, and on-going, support. They're also happy to have the Fairfield Food Pantry "go out of their way to help those who may not be out their back door. It means a lot to use, and it means a lot to the Dayton area."