

Event raises record amount for local pantries

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By ROMI HERRON For Sun-Times Media

BATAVIA -- While legislators are often focused on moving new laws through the checks and balances of government, on Friday, two state representatives were instead charged with moving as much food as possible from the store shelves to the checkout aisle as part of the Kane County Farm Bureau's Food Check-Out Challenge.

The event, held at Jewel-Osco, 119 S. Randall Road, is in its ninth consecutive year and enables area politicians to fill a grocery cart in five minutes with the items donated to a food pantry they select.

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State Rep. Randy Ramey (right), R-West Chicago, from the 55th District, and Dave Korezykowski, of the Northern Illinois Food Bank, participate in the ninth annual Farm Bureau Food Check Out Challenge Friday at the Jewel-Osco in Batavia. Corey R. Minkanic | For The Courier-News

Rep. Randy Ramey Jr., R-West Chicago, "shopped" for Northern Illinois Food Bank, and Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, selected Chicago's Lakeview Pantry as her beneficiary.

"This is a great thing. When you can combine a good time with a good cause and getting a job done, it's wonderful," said Northern Illinois Food Bank Executive Director Gary Garland. "We spend a lot of our time watching families struggle. In 2009, we had 10 percent more people who needed our services. It's a tough time."

But Ramey's speed and experience garnered more than \$1,600 worth of food for the Northern Illinois Food Bank.

"I have years of training at this," said Ramey, who is a volunteer with the Northern Illinois Food Bank and said he worked as a stocker for Jewel in Elmhurst as a teenager.

Christopher Strupp, public policy and advocacy specialist for the food bank, said Ramey set a record with the food collected and that he has been a pillar of support.

"He's always willing to help out, whether it's with events like this, or through legislation," Strupp said. "When people think of hunger, they usually think of people who don't have jobs, but almost half of our clients are working families who are making minimum wage, and it's just not enough."

Feigenholtz gathered a little more than \$844 in food for the Lakeview Pantry. The Kane County Farm Bureau selects a representative from a metropolitan area so that awareness of agriculture is fostered, said Ryan Klassy, communications director with Kane County Farm Bureau.

Friday's event was part of Food Check-Out Week, dedicated to helping teach Americans how to stretch their food shopping dollars with healthy, nutritious food, according to the Farm Bureau Web site www.kanecfb.com. The organization is a not-for-profit membership association serving members, local agricultural producers and Kane County communities since it was founded in 1912.