



Bike rider pedals to fight hunger



Bike for Food Pantries founder Mark Wiewel talks with Community Outreach Initiatives Director Stacey Nicholas as he gives her a check for \$5,410 from Bike for Food Pantries. He plans to travel 1,500 miles in 2020 — 300 miles for each of five food pantries he supports in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri — and raise \$6,000 for the Douglass Community Center Food Pantry.

TREVOR MCDONALD/COURIER-POST

By Trevor McDonald Hannibal Courier-Post

Posted: Sep. 9, 2020 11:28 am Updated: Sep. 9, 2020 2:33 pm

HANNIBAL | Mark Wiewel has pedaled more than 20,000 miles since 2006 on his recumbent bicycle, raising more than \$724,000 for area food pantries in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri — including more than \$36,000 for the Douglass Community Services Food Pantry since 2010.

Wiewel stopped by DCS on Friday, visiting with Community Outreach Initiatives Director Stacey Nicholas to drop off a check for \$5,410 as he continued toward his 2020 goal of pedaling his bicycle 1,500 miles — 300 miles for each of the five food pantries he supports. Wiewel had hip replacement surgery in February 2020 and was not allowed to ride his bicycle until April 24 — but he's already pedaled more than 1,200 miles since that time, and could be seen on the I-172 bridge in the past few weeks. Wiewel has been matching donations to area food pantries since founding Bike for Food Pantries in 2006, and he's raised \$724,332 for 19 food pantries while riding mile after mile on his bicycle.

Wiewel's work to help food pantries goes back to rides with his late wife, Karen, who passed away in January 2015 after a courageous battle with cancer.

The couple used to ride together for the cause of helping area food pantries. In 2016, Wiewel's daughter, Caroline, joined him on his mission. He rides year-round, “because people eat 365 days a year.”

During Bike For Food's first year, the goal of \$1,000 grew to \$2,000 for four Quincy food pantries. In 2015, donations came to \$111,000. From 2006 to 2015, bike rides coupled with countless donations brought in more than \$321,000 to area food pantries.

Wiewel worked with a sponsor in previous years to provide matching funds, but he sold a vehicle a few years ago so he could write the checks to each food pantry personally.

“Be a blessing to somebody today,” is Wiewel's mission statement, and it rings true each time he visits an area food pantry like the Douglass Community Center Food Pantry. Nicholas said Wiewel's donations were greatly appreciated.

“The donations from the bike ride really make a difference to our pantry, which because of COVID is serving more and more people,” Nicholas said. “We're always grateful for donors who step up or ride up to make their contributions, so we're very grateful for this.”

As Wiewel continues toward his goal for 2020, he stressed 100% of people's donations go toward the food pantry. He then makes a personal matching donation for each donation sent to DCS Food Pantry marked “Bike.”

Donations can be sent electronically through the DCS website at www.douglassonline.org by using the Community Outreach Initiatives option. Checks with the word “Bike” on them can be mailed to Douglass Community Center, 711 Grand Avenue, Hannibal, Mo. 63401.