

Dan Price

## Back Pack Buddy Night

Did you know that of the 19,000 kids in Humboldt County under age 18, 5,500 of those kids are eligible for a free lunch. Of the 10,000 kids in our county ~~for~~ elementary schools, 52% are eligible for a free lunch or reduced pay <sup>lunch</sup> based on their level <sup>low</sup> of income. Most of those kids are assured of getting good nutrition on the weekdays when they receive meals at school, but on the weekends the reliability of their meals becomes sketchy. Aware of this need, the Eureka Rotary Clubs have been filling in the gaps for the past 4-5 years, so the kids have adequate food over the weekends and holidays. The program to feed hungry children is called Backpacks for Kids. Into each backpack will go items like cans of tuna, soups, beans, macaroni and cheese, granola bars, breakfast cereals and a loaf of bread.

On Sunday evening May 20<sup>th</sup> an event will take place in our community that could make a huge difference in a child's life. I am talking about the "Backpack Buddy Night." All the proceeds of the night will help about 325 elementary age school children get sufficient food for a weekend when they might otherwise ~~go~~ without. This event is sponsored by Southwest, Old Town and Eureka Rotary Clubs, along with the Soroptimist Club of Humboldt Bay. It will be held at Cher-ae Heights Casino in Trinidad starting at 6:30pm. The food looks great (prime rib dinner) and there will be live music, silent and live auctions featuring Rex Bohn for the live auction—of course. Tickets are \$30 per person and Rex Bohn's entertaining auctioneering would alone be worth the price of admission.

For those who believe that parents should feed their own kids, and that this program might create unhealthy dependencies, I should mention that while parents may or may not have made some bad choices, their kids have few choices: fewer choices still if they are malnourished. ~~Kids don't function without adequate food.~~ To quote John Bradley of Eureka Rotary: "This is a gift of love to kids who have no control of their diet." John also reminded me that we are all dependent on our next meal regardless of income level.

Regarding the root cause of all the needs we see around us today in Humboldt, I'll quote from Mother Teresa: "In these twenty years of work amongst the people, I have come more and more to realize that it is being unwanted that is the worst disease that any human being can ever experience. Nowadays we have found medicine for leprosy and lepers can be cured... For all kinds of diseases there are medicines and cures. But for being unwanted, except there are willing hands to serve and there's a loving heart to love, I don't think this terrible disease can ever be cured."

If you would like to help the children of our community feel wanted, by attending the Backpack Buddy Night, tickets are available from Old Town Coffee, Food For People, or any of the Rotary Clubs in Eureka; or if you can donate time or an auction item <sup>or new furniture</sup> please call 269 4335.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment