



CATAWBA COUNTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Oct. 10, 2011

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PET FOOD PROGRAM ASSISTING 'BEST FRIENDS' OF MEALS ON WHEELS RECIPIENTS

HICKORY — Catawba County 4-H Club members are collecting dry dog and cat food for the pets of Catawba County Meals on Wheels recipients.

The Pet Food Program was recently begun by the local Meals on Wheels, which is operated by the Senior Nutrition Program of Catawba County Social Services. The pet food initiative got a boost last spring with a \$500 grant from the WALOP (We All Love Our Pets) fund of the Meals on Wheels Association of America.

Now the county's 4-H clubs are also helping with a pet food drive. The 4-H'ers have already assisted by repackaging pet food bought in bulk into gallon-sized bags that are suitable for delivery by Meals on Wheels volunteers. The Catawba County Youth Council is helping by sorting the packaged pet food by route.

From now through the end of January, the 15 clubs will be competing against each other to see who can collect the most dry dog and cat food for the program, according to Donna Mull, 4-H extension agent. Gallon-sized Ziploc bags are also needed to repackage the food.



Lester Huffman is a Meals on Wheels recipient who is receiving pet food for his dog Megan. The Meals on Wheels Pet Food Program is entirely funded by grants and financial donations, and by donations of dry pet food. The 4-H Clubs in Catawba County are conducting a Pet Food Drive to help the program. The 4-H'ers help repackage the pet food into smaller bags. The Catawba County Youth Council then sorts the bags by route. (Photo by Amanda Munden)

The county's Meals on Wheels Pet Food Program is a way to serve the emotional needs of senior citizens. It is entirely funded by individual donations, grants and donations of pet food. Some 22 percent of Catawba

County Meals on Wheels recipients have either a dog or a cat (or both). That amounts to 40 dogs and 20 cats.

Research has shown that pet ownership improves the emotional and physical health of senior citizens with physical limitations. However, some senior citizens on fixed incomes may forego some of their own needs in order to buy pet food, or even share their meals with their pets. In some cases, people have even been unwilling to evacuate from disaster areas without their pets. This new program supports the health of both pets and pet owners.

In the past, Meals on Wheels has received pet food donations through Banfield Animal Hospitals, which operate at PetSmart stores. Their program, called A Season of Suppers, asks shoppers to donate dog or cat food during November and December. Meals on Wheels hopes to continue receiving food through that program, although additional pet food is needed for year-round delivery.

“Meals on Wheels continues to apply for grants annually and welcomes pet food donations to sustain the program,” said Amanda Munden, coordinator of the Meals on Wheels Program. “We are grateful for the help of the Catawba County 4-H groups that help package the food for distribution and also conduct pet food drives to support the Pet Food Program.”

For more information about the 4-H Club Pet Food Drive, contact Donna Mull at 828-465-8242 or donnamull@catawbacountync.gov. To make a financial contribution to the program, contact Jan Shaffer at 828-695-5617 or jans@catawbacountync.gov.