



MAKING SURE THE collection was in tip-top shape was Carter Kisner, Hardware to drop off their canned goods for the Decatur County Food a boy in Cricket Ketterl's kindergarten class. He led the group to Stanley Pantry.

A very Merry Christmas indeed!

Donations overwhelm food pantry

The Decatur County Food Pantry is having a fantastic Christmas season so far, so good that manager Melanie Anderson said she thinks this may have been the best year yet.

"The donations have been pouring in," she said, "and they're helping a lot of people. We just got the donations from Teens for Christ last week, and today from the teens at the high school. They're very special people to help that much."

Joe Stanley of Stanley Hardware collects 2,000 items or more for the pantry every Christmas. He said that his drive is going strong at 1,156 as of Friday, and that he plans to deliver the goods after New Year's Day.

"Everybody has been donating," Mr. Stanley said. "We're even getting some visitors, people who used to live here and come to visit mom and dad, and they bring stuff down. We've got cash donations up to \$50, and a small pile of the yellow coupons from Raye's Grocery, too."

Is he worried about hitting his goal? Not at all, Mr. Stanley said.

"It's a great thing," he said, "and people are always very generous. We've been doing it since 1999. We were worried that first year and had no idea how it would work out. Two thousand didn't seem like too ambitious of a goal, but it took us to the last week to fill it up. It always works like that; the majority of the food comes in the last two weeks."

"When we load this up to take it over to the food bank, it will be almost 2,000 pounds of food."

Miss Anderson said that the pantry isn't particularly wanting for anything, but if people are looking for something good to bring in, it could use some more laundry supplies and personal hygiene products such as tooth paste or shampoo.

"But food-wise," she said, "we're doing fantastic. We've even had some donations of turkeys, so we've been giving those out for Christmas dinners."

Miss Anderson said the pantry won't be open for distribution on Christmas Day. She said she will be gone on vacation next week, but a volunteer will be at the pantry. She said she wasn't sure if they would be there Wednesday or Friday to take in food, but knew someone was coming in on Thursday to pass things out.

"It's been a very blessed season," she said, "and the Lord is smiling down on Decatur County."



AFTER WALKING TO the hardware store with their kindergarten class (below), Shelbi Weiger and Trenton Raile (left) waited patiently to place their canned goods on the window shelf of Stanley Hardware. Wyatt Coryell (above) was particularly excited about his contribution, which he put right on top of the massive pile.



Story and photos by Stephanie DeCamp