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Annual Pear Harvest hauls in a surprising bumper crop for Food Bank

By Vera Kochan



There was no need to use a magnifying glass to spot this season's pears on the trees. Hanging abundantly from all branches, the pears were large and in clusters, making the limbs bow down to the pickers for easy access. Given the continuation of another dry winter, this year's haul brought in approximately 10,500 pounds of pears for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano (more than twice the size of last year's 3,000 to 4,000-pound crop).

The one-day harvesting event took place on a balmy Aug. 7 morning with a bevy of nearly 170 volunteers arriving throughout the six-hour window to complete the labor of love. Armed with cardboard boxes and fruit picking poles, the workers were instructed not to pick any pears off the ground, even if they looked flawless.

Volunteers spend their morning picking pears for the Food Bank on Aug. 7. Photos Vera Kochan

"If they hit the ground we don't use them, because if they are bruised they will ripen too fast," explained Karen Reed, the event's coordinator who has been at the

helm for over 18 years. "The pears look really good this year; no spots on them." Fallen pears could be taken home by volunteers or were left on the ground for Moraga's woodland creatures to feast upon.

? The annual event was sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley and Moraga Park Foundation, with various teen organizations and residents doing the pear picking. The pickers worked on three locations at properties owned by the Moraga School District, St. Monica Catholic Church, and the Bruzzone family.

"This is my fourth time," said volunteer and Moraga resident, Mine Heber. "I do this to help the community. Last time I brought my kids. This year I'm here with my husband, Jorg."

A family that picks together, sticks together!

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