

West End Center Helps Passover Food Drive

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For the first time, the West End Community Center is participating in a Passover Food Drive to benefit impoverished Jews in the Greater Boston area.

The West End Community Center (WECC) is partnering with the Boston Synagogue to collect non-perishable kosher items, which will be donated to Greater Boston's largest kosher pantry, Family Table at Jewish Families and Children's Services (JF&CS).

"We've had a pretty good response," said Amy Erickson, WECC's executive director. "People will be giving more closer to (April) 17th," when the drive ends.

Passover, a high holiday celebrating the Jews' escape from slavery in Egypt, is Tuesday, April 19, and is celebrated with a symbolic meal.

"(The Boston Synagogue) asked us to support the spring food drive, and naturally we thought we'd do it," Erickson said.

The WECC has developed strong ties with the Boston Synagogue through various joint programs. Last fall, they held a Sukkot celebration with a decorating party and discussion of the holiday's meaning, and in August they both participated in a blood drive.

For the food drive, they are collecting canned salmon, fruit, vegetables and condensed apple juice, parve soup and tomato



sauce, powdered milk, crackers, cereal, raisins, toothpaste and shampoo.

The synagogue held the drive last year, which was "a phenomenal success," said Boston Synagogue Chair Susan Weingarten. The congregation, made up of 110 people, collected about half a dozen boxes.

"This year already we have a couple boxes, and we still have (several) days to go," Weingarten said. "We certainly would like to meet or surpass last year. We understand there is an increased need because of the economy. The economy plays a role in all of this."

In the past two years, Family Table has experienced an unprecedented 60 percent increase in need due to the economic crisis, according to JF&CS. The kosher food pantry serves about 550 people each month, and provides food, personal hygiene products and Jewish ritual items like challah and Shabbat candles.