

Recycling program expected to net \$80,000 this year *Grey Bears*

Busy Bears Show Model Effort

by Bob Johnson

When the California Grey Bears began collecting old newspapers a few years ago to earn some spare change

for their brown bag food program, nobody guessed it would snowball into the major recycling effort in Santa Cruz County.

While they are still picking up the newspapers—they have 107 recycling stations throughout the county—the Grey Bears are doing a growing business in old bottles, cans, cardboard and slick paper at their new Chanticleer Avenue headquarters.

The growing recycling program has solidified the Grey Bears' ability to keep handing out 3,400 bags of food a week while also keeping tons of trash off the streets and dumpyards of Santa Cruz.

The program is expected to net \$80,000 for the Grey Bears this year, according to Executive Director Michael Manfrey, and next year's take should come to \$100,000.

"Last year we lost \$20,000 because of revenue sharing cuts and we could lose that much again this year," Manfrey said. "The success of the recycling comes at a good time. It's allowing us to keep pace with cutbacks in government support."

Newspapers lead

Newspapers are still the major item at the recycling center. Last year the Grey Bears collected a

see page 15



VOLUNTEER members of the Grey Bears process old newspapers for the Watsonville flower industry.



GREY BEARS assembly line bags produce for delivery to people who can't get out.

FRONT PAGE STORY

Busy Bears do heckuva job

continued from page 1

million pounds of old newspapers.

But these days, the height of the season, Pajaro Valley nurseries are buying six tons a week of slick magazine type paper from the Grey Bears to wrap their flowers for shipping.

And the glass business has been another astonishing success since it was started a few months ago.

"When we first started using our ten-ton glass bin it took six weeks to fill it," Manfrey said. "Lately we were filling it in about ten days." The Grey Bears switched last week to a larger bin to handle the ton-a-day traffic in old bottles.

The need for a recycling center in the county became acute last November when the Ecology Action Center closed its doors for financial reasons after collecting the community's trash for years at its 17th Avenue site.

The folks at Ecology Action provided some technical advice, and referred their old customers to the Grey Bears. And the Grey Bears took it from there using their secret weapon: the 400 active volunteers who work regularly to make the food program go.

Food generosity

Each week 3,400 member seniors in Santa Cruz County receive their bag of food at 42 pick-up sites throughout the county. Homebound

seniors are served by a network of volunteer Grey Bears drivers who make weekly deliveries.

While some of the food comes from the backyard gardens and trees of friendly supporters, Manfrey said at least 90 percent of the food is donated by the growers and packers of the Pajaro Valley and North Coast and the organic farmers of Santa Cruz.

The generosity of these local people in the food business allows the Grey Bears to give away 1.5 million pounds of food a year.

And most of that food is going to people in need as Social Security and pension checks fail to keep pace with continually creeping inflation.

Last year 1,200 of the food recipients met the USDA low-income guidelines for receiving surplus food commodities.

But after the feds adjusted their standards this year to account for recent inflation, more than 1,800 of the 3,400 people receiving brown bags now receive less money than the USDA's low-income standard.

If you're wondering what to do with those newspapers and bottles yearning to be reused; or if you'd like to put up a modest \$10 to receive a weekly brown bag and a newsletter, the Grey Bears can be contacted at 479-1055.