

LINKS keeps finding ways to feed people

By [Erik Hidle](#), Columbian county government reporter

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Even with the price of gas on the rise, dings and dents to his vehicle, and his supply of nonperishable goods running dry, George Golden says his nonprofit is still moving forward with its goal: to help feed Clark County.

"I have nightmares some nights of what happens if I'm not around or we don't do this anymore," the 70-year-old Golden says. "If we didn't do it, it would just kill us to know that these people wouldn't get served."

Golden is the founder and CEO of local nonprofit LINKS, which for the past five years has sought out ways to collect food and provide food donations to as many as 600 people, up to three times a week.

The nonprofit is mostly run by Golden and two others — Michael Rankin and Don Meuchel — who spend time collecting food, connecting with organizations that can get the food to the needy and, perhaps most importantly, keeping the influx of food coming in.

"All I can say is, God has provided what we needed when we needed it," Golden said. "My dime has been stretched thin, but we've made it."

Over the past year, Golden said he's twice seen his supply of nonperishable foods run dry. That has pushed the organization to find different ways to keep food boxes filled.

This holiday season, the trio has spent time driving to local 7-Eleven stores to collect food items for their boxes. Golden says his vehicle has needed a few repairs during that time.

"We've put about \$2,000 into it in this past month alone," he says.

But again, Golden says it's worth it.

Earlier this month, a local school district contacted him telling him there was a family in "desperate need." Golden's response: "no problem."

He makes sure local police departments stay stocked with boxes in case they find families struggling to get by.

And he continues to contact other nonprofits, such as churches and shelters, that might be able to connect with people who are in need.

Golden says he doesn't vet any of the families or folks his group is trying to help. Rather, he's looking to supplement the good works other agencies are already doing.

"We're not a big group, but we've got a big footprint," Golden said.

In January, Golden said he hopes to have a local food drive in partnership with local Walmart stores. That should help with the nonperishable shortage for a little while.

But what he said the group could really use in the interim is funding.

"The biggest thing to know, if people want to donate, is that cash donations are very welcome," he said. "We're going to do this if we get noticed or not, or get funding or not, but every little bit helps."

LINKS can be contacted at www.linksusd.org or 360-713-3297.

