

# Food drive for Seeds of Hope under way

Contemporary gospel  
singer Norman Lee  
to perform Friday

By **PATRICIA STEELE**  
DAILY SUN

**THE VILLAGES** – The annual Seeds of Hope food drive is well under way, and the response has been tremendous, according to Bonnie Kusky.

Kusky, a Seeds of Hope committee member, is an active volunteer throughout the year raising funds and food for the Wildwood Soup Kitchen and Wildwood Food Pantry.

“We work all year long, because people get hungry all year long, but our main food drive is a concert series between March 2 and March 19,” Kusky said.

The Wildwood Soup Kitchen and the food pantry touch a place in Kusky’s heart and memories.

“I was raised by a single mother and I know what it was like to do without,” Kusky said. “There weren’t any food pantries or soup kitchens, but I remember receiving the Christmas and Easter baskets. They really meant a lot to me. It meant people cared.”

Her goal is for people in need to know there’s someone out there who cares.

In The Villages, there are many people who care.

Committee member Donna Vierow researched from 2006 to 2010 to see the dollar amount and tonnage of food collected during the annual Seeds of Hope drive.

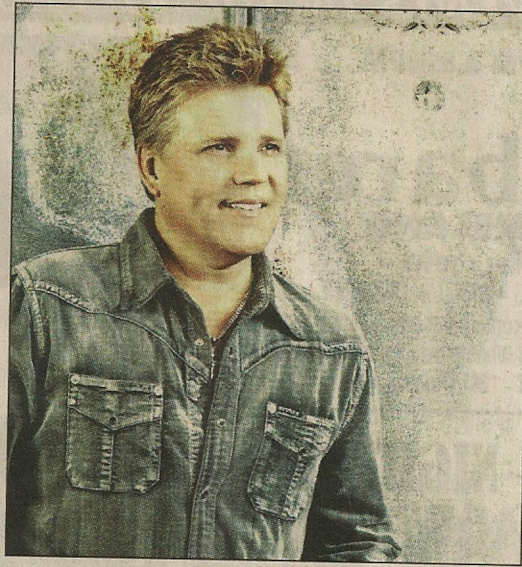
The soup kitchen and food pantry shared more than \$92,500 and 76,734 pounds of food donated during the food drive.

The Seeds of Hope’s goal for 2011 is \$25,000 and 25,000 pounds of food.

That sounds like a lot, and it is, but it’s nowhere near

**Norman Lee** will join friends for a Seeds of Hope Concert Friday at New Covenant United Methodist Church. The food and funds raised through the concert will benefit the Wildwood Soup Kitchen and Wildwood Food Pantry.

Submitted photo



## **SEEDS**, from C1

enough to keep the shelves stocked in the food pantry or the soup kitchen.

“What we raise has to tide them through the lean months, when donations all but dry up,” Vierow said.

The number of families served during the past several years has continued to increase as families lose their jobs and their homes, Kusky said. The need isn’t going away.

Seeds of Hope, the Wildwood Food Pantry and the Wildwood Soup Kitchen are all run by volunteers.

“No one has a paid salary,” Vierow said. “Every penny we collect goes to feed the hungry at one location or the other. That’s hundreds of volunteers sharing their time for others. To me, that’s just amazing.”

Seeds of Hope has 33 partner churches and congregations that support the food pantry and soup kitchen. During the next several days, special events at St. Timothy Catholic Community, Temple Shalom and Chick-fil-A will raise funds and food for the Seeds of Hope food drive.

On Friday, Norman Lee and friends, including Oscar Feliu and Kathleen Kane, will perform at New Covenant United Methodist Church in two shows at 4:30 and 7 p.m.

“It’s wonderful to be able to use your talent to help others,” Lee said. “It feels good to give to those who need it the most.”

Lee has participated in three or four concert series for Seeds of Hope and considers it a blessing to be able to do so.

“When we give to others, we’re blessed,” Lee said. “For my little part, I get to sing with my buddies and have a great time. It’s a win-win situation. The donations go to the people who need it, I’m having fun and the audience has fun.”

Seeds of Hope asks those attending the concerts to bring a nonperishable food item or items.

“I attended the Lenny Wilson Trio and Mary Jo Vitale concert, and I had people tell me how much they enjoyed the music,” Vierow said.

“But they also thanked me and other committee members for having an organized place and way they could give. Many people want to give and make a difference, but they’re not sure how to best serve the community.”

For information about Seeds of Hope, the concert series or donations, call Vierow at 750-3439.