

Nonprofits

Home / Entertainment / Nonprofits

http://www.gazettes.com/entertainment/nonprofits/canstruction-back-in-long-beach-to-benefit-food-finders/article_14998e44-c5a7-11e8-a832-3bd9b1399c67.html

CANstruction Back In Long Beach To Benefit Food Finders

By Casey N. Wilson

Contributor

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A can-structured Queen Mary at a previous contest.

—Photo courtesy Terri Henry Marketing

It's time to build.

CANstruction Long Beach will host its fifth annual event starting at 8 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 11, at the Landmark Square Building. According to organizers, this canned food drive has donated more than 83,000 pounds of food to the Long Beach community over the past four years while encouraging teamwork and bringing awareness to food insecurity.

CANstruction was started in 1992 in Atlanta and now takes place in 140 cities worldwide, supplying canned goods to nonprofits. Terri Henry Marketing brought the program to Long Beach in 2014.

"Besides the play on words for the name, this event is a unique, fun way to help alleviate food insecurity in the cities where CANstruction events take place," Henry said. "I don't think most people are aware that one in five of our neighbors in Long Beach is food insecure, meaning they don't know where their next meal is coming from. For the most part, these are not the people living on the streets — these are hard-working families and are primarily seniors and children."

Founded in 1989, Food Finders is an organization that works with grocery stores, caterers, restaurants and food vendors to distribute otherwise unused food to those in need.

"Food Finders is excited to be the beneficiary of the fifth annual Long Beach CANstruction," Patti Larson, Food Finders executive director, said. "Last year's event generated 12,000 pounds of donated canned goods, and this unique event will continue to heighten awareness of food insecurity in our community while helping us feed those in need in our own backyard."

CANstruction pits teams against each other to design elaborate structures using only canned food. Sculptures can be as large 10' by 10' by 10' and be compiled from over 15,000 lbs of food. Three teams have twelve hours to build with the finished project to be on display for 10 days. Visitors are encouraged to vote by placing canned food in the Food Finders bin next to their favorite structure.

On Oct. 22, Food Finders will distribute the cans to local agencies and then host a small awards ceremony where teams receive titles such as for Structural Integrity, Most Cans and People's Choice.

CANstruction was designed as not only a way to help those in need but also as a team-building exercise. This year's participants are P2S Engineering partnering with MHP Structural Engineers, Moffatt & Nichol and the Long Beach Water Department.

"This project takes time and commitment and all along the way you are working for others, which is very fulfilling. It's very fulfilling to do something about a very real problem that we are faced with every day," said Ari Konyalian, a mechanical engineer at Moffatt and Nichol who has participated in the project since it first began in Long Beach. "The day of the build is always great. It's a culmination of a lot of hard work by a lot of people."

CANstruction Long Beach 2018 is sponsored by the Port of Long Beach, Long Beach Post, Terri Henry Marketing, Full Riot Productions, Century 21 Masters, TLD Law and S&W Beans.

For more information about CANstruction Long Beach, go to www.CANstructionLongBeach.org and for more on CANstruction® International, go to www.CANstruction.org. For more information about Food Finders, visit www.FoodFinders.org.