

A Meal for Every Mile

By Jean Follmer, with Angela LaScala-Gruenewald



From right to left: Diana LaScala-Gruenewald, Daniel Mather and Angela LaScala Gruenewald at the end of trail in Tahoe City

A 2007 visit to Lake Tahoe prompted Lafayette sisters Angela and Diana LaScala-Gruenewald to consider the Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT). As avid backpackers, they decided to take it on during the summer of 2008. With Diana at MIT and Angela at Acalanes, they would be able to really catch up. They had volunteered extensively through Contra Costa's Youth Action Council, so it felt natural to build public service into

their hike. After considering many options, "Backpacking for Food" was born.

The goal was to raise funds for The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. The idea was simple: Backpack around the TRT, ask for pledges for miles and donate proceeds to The Food Bank. One dollar can purchase three cans of food, so they set their fundraising goal at \$3000 for 10,000 cans of food.

Angela said "During the summer, the generous spirit of the holidays fades away and the organization struggles. That's one of the primary reasons this project will really help." Diana said her community service passion was initially inspired by Joan Tomasini of the Food Bank during her freshman year at Acalanes. The sisters have worked with Joan ever since.

They were thrilled to discover incredible support through-

out the community. Diablo Foods generously offered their store front for fundraising and REI in Berkeley also opened their doors to them. The sisters found a fellow devoted backpacker who wanted to pitch in and help. They worked together with Daniel Mather throughout the month of June fundraising and planning. Although they fell short of their goal, they raised over \$2,200 in pledges.

On June 28th, they set off for the TRT. In total, they hiked 169 miles averaging 12 miles a day for 15 days. They carried 3-4 days of food at a time, picking it up at three planned drop-off points. Angela said the hike had a tremendous impact on her: "The experience was amazing. The backpacking was incredible and I learned a lot about the struggle (in fundraising) for non-profits. We thought of every mile as a meal and went for it." Diana said the bonus was "We got to do something we really love."

The Lafayette sisters will complete "Backpacking for Food" on August 1st when they turn in the donations to the Food Bank. They hope to reach their \$3,000 goal and are still accepting donations. To help them reach their goal, contact them at backpacking4food@gmail.com.