

Christmas food basket program began with a bag of potatoes.

Bill Buss was a small-town farmer with a big heart.

In the late 1940s on a farm between Gothenburg and Cozad, Buss gathered sacks of potatoes and hauled them to town every December.

Gothenburg businessman Blaine Peterson says he's pretty sure Buss grew the potatoes himself, although it's possible they came from somewhere else.

It doesn't really matter anymore where the potatoes came from. What matters is where they ended up.

Blaine said every year around Christmas, Buss delivered the sacks of potatoes to people in town who he believed could use the extra food.

That was the meager beginning of the community's Christmas food basket program more than 60 years ago.

Blaine said he's not certain how long Buss delivered the potatoes before he approached the grocer about adding more food to the deliveries.

Blaine said dented canned goods were included at little cost as well as turkeys with minor

'Tis the season for sharing



defects.

"We could get a turkey with a missing wing or something like that for close to nothing," Blaine said.

In later years, bigger turkeys were cut in half to share with more families.

Shares fund tops \$1,500 Contrology Street received an advantation to the control of the control

Somehow, Buss always found enough community donations to cover the cost.

"Bill Buss was solely responsible for (the food basket program)," Blaine said. "He just drew other people into it to help."

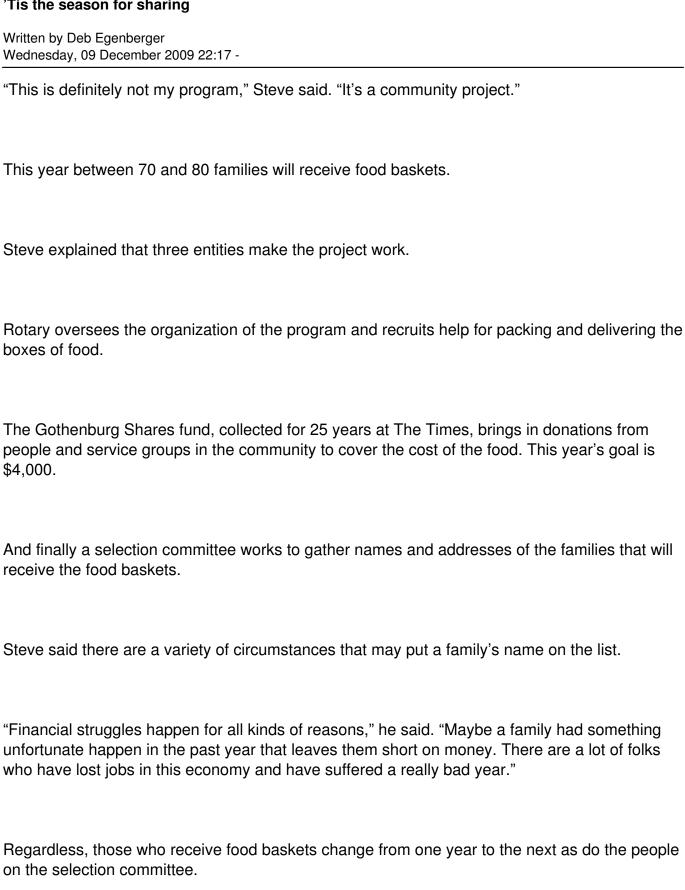
Blaine's son Steve remembers when he first got involved in the mid-1970s.

"Bill would come in the grocery store and we'd talk about how much food we needed," Steve said. "Then he'd disappear and come back with money."

It was somewhat magical, Steve said, sort of like Santa.

When the Gothenburg Rotary Club was chartered in 1980, Steve said he pitched the Christmas food baskets as a service project idea and the organization got involved.

'Tis the season for sharing



On the Saturday before Christmas, volunteers will gather to fill the boxes. Steve said it usually takes much of the morning to distribute three or four pallets of food between boxes designed for small, medium and large families.

'Tis the season for sharing

Written by Deb Egenberger Wednesday, 09 December 2009 22:17 -

Then other volunteers spend a day or two delivering the goods which include canned vegetables, fresh fruit, bread, jelly, marshmallows, ham and, of course, a bag of potatoes.

"At one time we talked about not doing the potatoes because they're heavy and they're kind of a pain to deliver," Steve said. "We knew we couldn't do that, though. That's how this whole thing got started."