

It was refreshing and encouraging - for several reasons - to see Mayor Dewey Bartlett and most of the new city councilors join together to launch a city-sponsored food drive to help address one of this region's fastest growing problems. Five of the seven new city councilors who will be sworn in Monday plus one incumbent joined Bartlett at the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma on Thursday in a show of unity to launch the food drive. "I am looking forward to teaming up with the city councilors-elect to get food on Green Country tables," Bartlett said during a news conference. "More than 23 percent of our children live in poverty, according to the food bank, which means one in five Oklahoma children is at risk of going to bed hungry every night. We hope Tulsans will join us in this effort to help families in need this holiday season," he added. Food insecurity - which means disrupted meal patterns and hunger - is a growing problem in this region. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated that 7.5 percent of Oklahoma households faced "very low food security," up from 5.6 percent in 2004. The city's campaign, "Food 2 Families," will run through Christmas Eve. Food can be donated at all 30 fire stations and Tulsa-area Reasor's grocery stores, and the food bank also would welcome cash donations. For every new dollar donated or increase from current donors, the George Kaiser Family Foundation will match it, up to a \$100,000 total. The oil and gas production firm Nadel & Gussman already has donated \$25,000 toward the drive. The regional food bank has 450 partner programs that distribute meals to 70,000 area residents each week. And it's not enough to meet the constantly growing demand. A sum of \$200,000 would purchase the equivalent of a half-million pounds of food. Joining Bartlett in the announcement and a tour of the food bank were new councilors Phil Lakin, Jeannie Cue, David Patrick, Blake Ewing and Karen Gilbert. Incumbent Councilor Jack Henderson, who was re-elected, also was on hand. "With the economy being the way it is, there's more people who need help than ever before,"

Henderson said. We applaud the joint effort of the mayor and councilors and encourage Tulsans to give it their generous support. And, we also appreciate the symbolic effort of the group to gather together in one place and work together toward a common, worthwhile goal. Let's hope this is a sign of what's to come. SUBHEAD:

Local leaders launch food drive Original Print Headline: Good sign