

## Public safety teams' game helps fill food bank's shelves

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A rivalry basketball match pitted Buckeye's police and fire departments against each other for a good cause this week.

The crowd at the town's Martin Luther King Diversity Day game donated almost 500 canned goods for the Buckeye Food Bank.

A year's worth of bragging rights goes to the Fire Department.

"We got our heads handed to us," said Police Chief Dan Saban, whose officers' team lost 57-37. "But we fought hard all the way."

"We beat them in football and they beat us in basketball," he said, referring to a staff game last month. "Now it's time for softball."

With 350 screaming fans at the Buckeye Union High School gymnasium, "it was like being at a Suns game it was so loud in there," Saban said.

The event was an attempt to get more community support for the town's second Martin Luther King Jr. holiday celebration.

Not as many people showed up for last year's parade as hoped, said Ted Burton, case manager for Buckeye Outreach for Social Services, which sponsored Monday's game.

"We wanted to do something a little different this year," he said, capitalizing on the two departments' friendly competition.

"The public really enjoys seeing their public safety personnel going at each other," said Saban, though he bemoaned the lopsided cheering.

"It was a good 4-to-1" ratio of fans rooting for the firefighters compared to the officers, said Fire Department engineer Ely Rivera, the team's

captain.

"Everyone loves us. We're the good guys. They're the bad guys," Rivera joked.

As for the event's diversity, "There were all groups of people there: Black, White, Hispanic," Burton said. "It was beautiful seeing everyone coming together for one cause."

The donated food will fill some of the food bank's need, but "it's just the tip of the iceberg. I wish we could do more," he said.

With an eye on capturing a trophy for the police next year, Lt. Phil Harris, who spent the game in the stands, vowed, "We're going to spend this year recruiting some players."

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