

## **EMA Feeds People in Need Around U.S.**

*by Valliere Jones, contributing writer*

Although many Avnet employees resolved to eat less after the holidays, millions of people around the world don't get enough to eat each day. Knowing food banks have been hit hard by the tough economy, several Avnet Electronics Marketing (EM), Americas locations have rallied to help.

The EM branch in St. Louis requested suppliers attending its annual holiday luncheon each bring a non-perishable food item – and was surprised at the response.

"We have fewer suppliers and reps now than ever, but as hard as times are, they really came through," says Sandy Silger, product marketing manager. "Most of them brought bags full and canned goods by the case."

The branch collected 150 food items at the luncheon, delivering a car full to the O.A.S.I.S. Food Pantry. Additionally, employees decided to forego exchanging holiday gifts to contribute more to the project.

"We used to exchange gifts, but many of us have been here a long time and didn't really need another trinket, so we decided to use the funds for a better cause," Sandy says. "Some employees took the same idea to their families and in lieu of picking a name and exchanging gifts, they donated to the food pantry."

In addition to collecting 501 pounds of nonperishable food items for the Second Harvest Food Bank, employees in Milpitas, Calif., donated \$885 to the nonprofit organization after learning that every dollar donated equates to \$7 worth of buying power for the food bank.

"When we found out about Second Harvest's buying power, employees were even more giving – we began receiving dollars much quicker than food items," says Magda Casas, administrative assistant. "Knowing we were helping our community and those in need, especially during this economic downturn, was very motivational."

Milpitas has supported Second Harvest for 14 years and offered incentives to employees who participated. Those donating \$5 or five cans of food received one free Jeans Day, and those donating \$20 or 20 cans received a full week.

After the holidays passed, the branch didn't give up on Second Harvest – employees are already planning another food drive for June.

Meanwhile, Material Specialist Sydney Rivers heard about a "Crusade for a Million Cans" food drive for St. Vincent de Paul on her favorite Phoenix radio station, and started a campaign to help the organization, which distributes 150,000 food boxes each year. She placed collection boxes in the cafeteria for three weeks in November, and employees filled them with 2,000 cans and contributed \$70.

"It all starts with one good idea – you can get the ball rolling and the Avnet community is always there to help," says Sydney. "Everyone came together quickly, and it was rewarding to reach out and touch so many lives through giving."

However, the food drive isn't the only way Phoenix employees support St. Vincent de Paul. A group of five employees from EM and Global Information Solutions brings and serves breakfast to the homeless at the St. Vincent de Paul shelter every other month. Ten also volunteer to serve lunch on Saturdays or Sundays four times a year. Since the group began volunteering, 30 employees have participated.

And in Chicago, where 12 to 15 employees volunteer for three hours every month at Northern Illinois Food Bank (NIFB), employees have collected food for a variety of organizations. But in sorting and boxing donations at NIFB, the branch has learned what kinds of items are [particularly popular](#).

"The items on this list are the hot commodities we see when we're volunteering," says Cara Schiavone, administrative assistant. "They are definitely the items food banks want to receive."