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Your con

An opportunity for growth

Farm labor lets inmates learn skills, feed hungry

By DAN WEST
Dan.West@sentinel.com

It was still cool Wednesday morning when a van of Delta County Correctional Facility inmates pulled into the gravel parking lot at the Colorado State University Extension Fruita Research Station. Inmate workers filed out of the van and started moving pallets and boxes to the station's watermelon patch.

The offenders were working as part of the outdoor work program, which has been ongoing at the Delta County Correctional Facility since the late 1960s. They were in Fruita to harvest and pack the watermelons, which had been planned and maintained by other inmates over the summer. The station then donated the watermelons, which weighed more than 5,700 pounds, to the Western Slope Food Bank of the Rockies.

"Offenders who are close to their release date participate in these work release supervised trips to nonprofits and cities to work on projects," said Amanda McQuade CSU Extension Community Alliance Program Coordinator. "The idea is to



BLAKEZIE LANGRISH/The Daily Sentinel

Head researcher Perry Cabot, left, and an inmate at the Delta County Correctional Facility haul watermelons during the harvest at the Colorado State University Extension Fruita Research Station on Wednesday. The watermelons will go to Food Bank of the Rockies. The offenders were taking part in the outdoor work program, which has been ongoing at the Delta County facility since the late 1960s.

Food Bank needs your produce

By DAN WEST
Dan.West@sentinel.com

The Western Slope Food Bank of the Rockies is benefiting from a special collaboration between the Delta County Correctional Facility work force and the Colorado State University Extension Fruita Research Station to grow and donate fresh produce. However, the food bank is always in

need of donations, especially produce.

The food bank, which is based in Palisade, covers the entire Western Slope and provides food to nearly 100 food pantries. One of the goals is to have a quarter of its food come from fresh produce. Sue Ellen Rodwick, Director of the Western Slope Food Bank of the Rockies, said,

"Most of our produce we

have to pay for," Rodwick said. "It is not donated to us. So the more we can get donated to us means the more we are able to give."

Rodwick said the number of local growers donating is increasing, but not at a steady pace, which makes it difficult to predict and manage. She is reaching out to more growers and is encouraging locals to consider donating excess pro-

duce from their gardens or fruit trees.

"We're especially trying to make more connections with local growers, letting them know that they can donate any produce, their seconds that they can't sell retail," Rodwick said. "If somebody would still eat it, donate it to the food bank and we'll give it to people who really benefit from it and may not get that nutrition."

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