

By TIM SWITZER Leader-Post

Olympic mittens take on a new form

The CAN-adian red mittens so popular in Vancouver during the Olympic Games are proving they can draw a crowd in any form.

The latest interpretation of the must-have souvenir from the Vancouver games came in the form of two eight-foot-tall mittens comprised of hundreds of cans of Chef Boyardee and Puritan stew for the Regina Food Bank's 14th annual Canstruction event held at the Cornwall Centre and Northgate Mall.

The two giant mittens — complete with white maple leaves formed by the UPC codes on canned salmon — were separated by a small podium with cartons of apple juice in the gold-medal position, peanut butter on the silver platform and cans of condensed milk winning the bronze. The three podium finishers were representative of three of the top needs of the food bank.

Canstruction judges were able to look past the fact that the maple leaves were displayed on the outside of the mittens (rather than on the palms like the smaller, wearable versions) to award the design, created by Harvard Developments, Stantec Architecture and PCL Construction, the best-in-show and best-meal awards.

"The red mittens have become a cultural symbol and they unify the country ... and the podium really embraces a sense of community in supporting the food bank," said team leader Regan Halbert. "We're actually really proud of getting the best-meal award because we spent a lot of time picking out cans that were on the most-wanted food list. That'll benefit the food bank a lot."

While other awards were handed out by a jury Saturday, the biggest reward for most competitors is doing something for those in need. All of the canned food used in the seven entries will go to the food bank after remaining on display until March 6 at the two malls. More than 33,000 cans of food are expected to be collected between those used in the competition and others donated to the bins at each location.

"It's just a great community initiative and it's great for the food bank because it not only raises awareness, but it supports the cause too," said Halbert. "You're sort of hitting both sides of the charity."

Regina Food Bank director of resource development Todd Sandin said that is exactly the idea for the months after the holidays when the food bank is not top of mind for many people.

"We have our Christmas campaign and through spring months, we still have work to do," said Sandin.

The most sought-after award for the entrants — the People's Choice Award — is still to come. The public can vote for their favourite structure in person at customer service desks at each location or, beginning Tuesday morning, online at leaderpost.com after checking out photo galleries the of each creation.

The University of Regina faculty of engineering's creation, "Curling Crock," won two prizes Saturday: Best structural ingenuity and a jurors' choice honourable mention.

The structure featured a large curling rock with "VANCOUVER 2010" emblazoned on its side and the top pulled off to reveal a bowl of soup inside.

Associated Engineering's "AE Gives a Dam" won the other honourable mention for its portrayal of a large dam with tomato sauce cans for rock walls and blue baby food jars for the blocked off river.

The "Regina Inukshuk" built by Kreate Architecture and Design won the best use of labels award for its structure which matched almost exactly the same colours used in the inukshuk Vancouver 2010 logo.