



Villages

Family affair evolves into aiding others

By PATRICIA STEELE, DAILY SUN

WILDWOOD. Thanksgiving is associated with families sharing time laughing and eating around a table laden with food. Very seldom is need and loneliness a part of that picture.

But the volunteers at Wildwood Soup Kitchen realize that, especially during the holiday season, people in need and living alone should be part of the picture.

That is why more than 25 volunteers spent their Thanksgiving serving turkey and all the trimmings to the Soup Kitchen's family of friends who regularly eat lunch at the kitchen each day.

There were a number of families sharing time together at the kitchen, including head cook for the Soup Kitchen, Diane McCarthy and her husband Dana, and Harry Commons and his wife Susan with their two children and four grandchildren.

But instead of sitting around a table giving thanks, they were behind a counter serving up meals for 110 homebound Wildwood area residents and almost as many walk-in people in the dining room.

Catering to others

The Commons and extended family spent their holiday serving others at the soup kitchen.

Heather arranged for us to volunteer as a family as a surprise for me," Harry said. "I'm always complaining we never give back enough to the community, so here we are celebrating together by serving others. It is absolutely wonderful."

His daughter Heather Figlow was familiar with the Wildwood Soup Kitchen because her daughters, Brittany and Kaitlyn, are members of the All-in-One 4-H club. One of their projects is to collect food for the soup kitchen.

"I figured it was time, the girls see where their donations go and work to help others," Heather said.

Less traditional family

A little less traditional family was also sharing lunch at the Soup Kitchen — the family of friends who come together for the hot meal and to share friendship. Some live alone so the soup kitchen is a chance for them to connect with the outside world.

One of these people, extrovert David Vrotney, has been coming to the soup kitchen for five years now. He is known to regular volunteers and regular patrons of the Soup Kitchen alike.

"I moved to Wildwood from Pennsylvania five years ago this month," Vrotney said. "I almost immediately became disabled and couldn't work."

For nearly a year, he didn't have an income. His son took care of housing, but the soup kitchen provided a hot meal

daily for David.

It also provided a lifeline to other people during a difficult time in his life.

Times are a little better now, but the daily meals help him extend his budget.

The soup kitchen has become a place where all the volunteers know his name. They enjoy his outgoing personality and positive outlook on life and his family of friends are there for him to joke with, argue politics with and express himself with.

"When I come here, I know I can talk about my God, and I can feel comfortable expressing my faith," Vrotney said.

Volunteers at the soup kitchen come for many reasons, but stay because of the feeling giving back to the community gives them.

Dana McCarthy, president of the Wildwood Soup Kitchen board said, "It was wonderful to have so many volunteers today. We had this wonderful family, (referring to the Commons), just walk in the door this morning ready to help."

It's not just today, a holiday, that people give to the Wildwood Soup Kitchen.

"We have a most generous community that give to the kitchen," McCarthy said. "If they didn't we wouldn't be here. We get no funds from any government, local, state or federal. What we have is through the giving spirit of people in this area."

To make cash or food donations to the Wildwood Soup Kitchen, call 748-1008.

Patricia Steele is a reporter with the Daily Sun. She can be reached at 753-1119, ext. 7992, or patricia.steele@thevillagesmedia.com.

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