

Feed A Family 2009 Summary

Greetings from the Feed A Family team! Congratulations for another successful year of serving Myrtle Beach and surrounding communities. Year four saw service expanded to an even wider community--but it began like the others--low on funds, volunteers, and the Herculean task of identifying more than 550 needy families. A challenge of the project is, and has always been, to inspire people of good will to become involved in one more worthy project before the years end.

Again, this year started the same as years before. Chef Peter of the Hilton and Ray Rice of US Foods rallied and our journey began. All agreed to "Order the food and accept on faith that the money will come in!" Early on a grim fact beset the team... Myrtle Beach area citizens were struggling more than ever. Several key people and organizations that donated in previous years were able to give but some were not. We lost a 5k donor from last year and our goal was raising 22k. Several organizations and individuals came forward and made up for the lost donors. Our group of non professional event planners and fund raisers were "bailed out" by these individuals. We appreciate all that contributors (old and new) did.

We had the same menu as last year:

- 12-14 pound turkey
- Mashed potatoes
- Gravy
- Stuffing
- Cranberry sauce
- Green Beans
- Dinner Rolls
- Pumpkin pie

The food was again delivered in boxes and decorated by volunteers, which included several hundred local school children. Some boxes had to be seen to be appreciated. We thank the school system and teachers for their assistance. Incidentally, teachers provide supplies for projects like ours at their expense. Feed A Family acknowledges their determined effort.

The group received a blessing in disguise this year. The Sun News, Carolina Chronicle, and WMBF television all gave media attention to our cause. We were overwhelmed by people wanting to get involved. For the first time we had to turn away volunteers. This was a new development and really made us take a step back. We did not want to turn anyone away and have already begun brainstorming ways to use those resources and make a larger impact in Horry County for 2010.

As the meals were prepared a new opportunity arose-- US Foods gave us a bonus of 62--10 pound turkey breasts. We sent word out that we had 620 pounds of turkey that could be shaved if any organizations needed help. We got quick replies from a local HOSPICE branch and the Myrtle Beach "Street Reach" center. Chef Peter, Ray Rice, and the FAF Board decided to provide individual meals for up to 350 people. The turkey was shaved and extra portions of the other food and deserts were ordered to prepare individual delivery trays. Also, 220 additional turkey sandwiches along with deserts and condiments were placed in 110 "to go" bags as a later meal for those served by "Street Reach." These meals were served from different locations. We will target both organizations for feeding holiday meals in 2010. Our intention is to expand greatly our reach next year. The organizers of these worthy causes are very impressive individuals.

Delivery day went well again this year. The meals were packed, loaded, and distributed without many problems (depending on who you ask). Stories again trickled in about some of the heart breaking situations and the blight of several of the neighborhoods where deliveries were made. Myrtle Beach has a massive need for feeding, educating, enabling, and developing people of meager means. With this in mind FAF challenges ourselves and others to this year adopt a cause beyond ones that you are currently involved. It can be monetary, time, spreading the word, committing to acknowledging another, and even just to compliment someone every day. If you believe as we do...that a "flap of a local butterfly wings can lead to a hurricane on the other side of the world," make someone feel better by contributing in any fashion your heart desires. FAF is accepting donations and comments on experiences you had, ways to better our cause, or just saying "hello." Please take the time to touch base with us. Tell your contacts about www.feedfamilies.com. If you are having tough times, can you get 10 people to sponsor a family at \$35 per family? The spirit of our community will be greatly lifted by small actions. Mighty oaks grow from

tiny acorns.

Last year we related a story about a young girl named Gracie, who helped her mother deliver meals. Gracie's mother contacted us again this year and told a story about another family to whom they delivered. After making three or four deliveries Gracie was visibly distraught by the conditions of some of the families on our list. Although gratitude for the meals was remarkable, Gracie still was not "herself". After the last delivery Gracie and her mother slowly walked back to the car and heard the front door to the home open. A child no older than three charged out towards Gracie with a smile that melted her heart. The young child handed Gracie a home made Christmas wreath. The wreath had a cardboard back and a glue base covered with local hand picked sea shells. On the back of the wreath the words "Merry Christmas" were written in a child's handwriting. Upon accepting the wreath both parties hugged and went their own way. The young child was looking back, smiling sweetly, and waving frantically. Gracie, smiling and teary eyed, had that moment of "GETTING IT" --what helping others is about. If Gracie and the little girl "got it", maybe some of the 4,000 people served "got it." Hopefully, some of the 550 school children and their parents "got it." Maybe some of the several hundred families, businesses, kitchen volunteers, media personnel, delivery drivers, and money givers "got it."

Year four of Feed A Family ended with a major surprise. Our organization was awarded the "Dr. Martin Luther King Service Organization for Change Award." While we have never sought recognition, a sense of pride is shared by all and we are forever indebted to those who gave so much.

Hopefully, someone reading this attempt to put in perspective what YOU, the Myrtle Beach community, accomplished will understand and be moved. Sure, we fed a holiday meal to a good number of needy people --but what we really did was provide HOPE, even if for just an all too brief moment. If there is HOPE all things are possible. Darkness and frustration can be defeated when HOPE abounds.

Thank you, Myrtle Beach. Our greatest asset is not beaches or industry; it is the hearts of people like you who give so much! Be Proud!

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