

FAQs about the St. James Place Community Kitchen

How often do you serve a meal?

We serve an evening meal, Monday through Friday, from 4:30 to 6:00PM.

How many people, on average, come for the meal?

We not only have to guess "Who's coming to dinner" but how many as well. Some nights there are as few as 150 people, other nights as many as 280. Our record is 323 on a regular night. At the Blue T-Shirt Steak Dinner in 2010 we served 631 meals. In 2009 an average 212 hungry people came each night; so far in 2010 an average of about 231 people join us for each meal.

Who comes for the meal?

Guests whose life has hit a bump in the road, the homeless, families who have no food in the house, single parents with children, college students, elderly people who simply don't want to eat alone, our regulars, our irregulars - they all come for a warm meal and respect as befits their dignity as children of God. Each night we welcome up to 30 children who are there with a parent or guardian.

How do you prepare when you're not sure of how many people will come?

Depending on what's being served, we usually cook for 250 guests. Most times there is not enough of any one entrée for the entire evening; an average evening may have 2 or 3 entrees in combination with several side dishes. Leftovers will show up on the next evening's menu. If we run short on entrées we heat up frozen pizzas, the late comers always enjoy the substitute.

Do you screen the people who come?

No. This is the only service offered at St. James Place with no questions asked. For example, in the food pantry people must show proof of identity, proof of address, proof of income, and proof of all members in the household. The dining rooms have 12 long tables, eight chairs to a table. It's elbow-to-elbow. If you come with a friend, you may not be able to sit next to each other. This isn't restaurant ambience. If you come to eat here, you probably need the meal.

Who cooks the food?

Rudi Floyd is our cook and resident "magician". Magician in that she must survey what foodstuffs are available at around 1:00pm each day, and from what's available create a dinner menu for the evening. Rudi receives help from a handful of volunteers from the neighborhood (Rosa, Archie, June, Angela, Rodney, ...). I asked one of our guests last week "Why do you come to our Kitchen to eat?" She said "The food is always real good and the people are always friendly - but the food is sure good."

What kinds of meals are served?

It's not a soup kitchen. We don't serve soup. Warm and tasty food is served with a welcoming smile and a big helping of hospitality. The bill of fare includes chicken, meat loaf, chili, hot dogs, biscuits and gravy (Rudi's gravy is a very popular item), mashed potatoes, pasta, assorted vegetables, fresh salads, pie, cake, donuts, fruit, ice cream and the ever popular pizza. On special occasions we have turkey with all the fixings.

Where does the food come from?

Food comes from many and ever changing sources - many days it's mainly provided by the Holy Spirit. Much of our food comes from Harvesters for a minimal fee of \$0.10 per pound. We prepare many entrees from scratch; others are picked up frozen by Harvesters from the New Dinner Theatre and other area restaurants who regularly prepare extra food for us. We receive these items in foil pans along with the lifesaving Pizza Hut pizzas. The majority of our fresh produce, along with many other items we serve, are picked up at SYSCO Foods by our volunteers. Volunteers also pickup bread and pastries from a number of area grocery stores. Donuts are provided twice a week from Lamar's. Someone once said that there is plenty of food on the planet for everyone - the problem is distribution. The volunteers who pick up and deliver the food we serve are solving this problem.

How is the meal paid for?

We calculate the cost of the food we have to buy, utilities, kitchen supplies and the cook's salary, and it comes to about \$150 a night. Generous people donate at least \$150 to sponsor each meal. Nights are sponsored in memory of or in honor of someone, anonymously, for a cause, or simply through a donor's generosity. In 2009 every night was sponsored. In 2010, about 30 nights, mostly in November and December, are not yet sponsored. You can sponsor a night by visiting our website, www.bishopsullivan.org, or by calling 816-231-0984 and asking for Joe Quinn.

How is the meal served?

It is served cafeteria style and volunteer groups of eight to twelve people dish up the food, do the dishes, clean the kitchen and mop the floor after the meal. Volunteers arrive around 4:00pm and are usually on the way home by 6:45pm. We have 25 volunteer groups, mostly Catholic Churches, who help us monthly. We average 221 volunteers in the Community Kitchen each month.

How can I help?

We could have 1000 volunteers ready to work, but without generous donations to the Bishop Sullivan Center, we couldn't open our doors. We need to buy food and supplies as well as pay for gas, electricity, water, trash pickup, internet, pest control and many other expenses. Please donate at www.bishopsullivan.org and help us feed the hungry in our city.