

Thankful Hearts

Delivering more than groceries at Thanksgiving

Author(s): Margo Booth The Nugget
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When Amberly Enich was growing up her dad worked long, hard hours; while they “never went without,” feeding the family was often a struggle. And when holidays rolled around, especially holidays centered around food—they put added stress on the family’s tight budget.

Enich’s friend Brigette Barker can relate. “We had seven people in our house and only one worked,” she said.

The two women, and four of their close friends, are making it possible for many Dahlonega families in similar situations to celebrate Thanksgiving with a very special home-cooked meal. The group of women banded together three years ago to form **Thankful Hearts** Take-N-Bake.

It was a simple concept. Collect groceries—Thanksgiving turkeys with all the trimmings—and distribute them to families who need a little help. “Every family should be able to celebrate Thanksgiving in their own home with their family around them, and it should not be a financial burden for them to do so,” said Enich.

“Something like this would have been such a blessing to my family.”

In 2013 the six women set out with a goal of feeding ten local families at Thanksgiving; they raised enough money to feed 29, and that’s what they did. The next year their goal was 40 and they fed 50. This year the goal is 50.

How it works

Thankful Hearts collects donations from businesses, groups and individuals. Contributions come from social media contacts, friends and family, word of mouth and Nugget readers said Barker. It costs \$75 to feed a family.

“This is an amazing community and people just want to help,” said Enich. “We’ve never actually had to go out asking for donations.”

At the same time money is being collected, applications are being taken for the those who might need the food. Anyone can nominate a family. “You can nominate yourself or anyone you know,” said Enich, who personally calls every nominee to discuss their situation. “The people we want to help may not qualify for government assistance or other food programs,” she said. They may just be struggling to put food on the table right now, and would really appreciate the opportunity to serve a special holiday meal to their family,” she said.

And the meal is pretty special. It includes a frozen turkey and a frozen ham, dressing, gravy, vegetables, sweet potatoes, and pie, plus a little extra to help make the leftovers go further, said Enich.

Then, when the ladies have the list of families who qualify and the total of donations for the year, they make a grocery list.

Enich and Barker laugh about their shopping trip the first year, filling about 15 grocery carts. Now they are thrilled to be able to just turn their list over to Walmart where the order is filled and put onto pallets for pick up. “Walmart has been amazing to us,” said Enich.

On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving the women move the food and a roomful of volunteers into the community room at Dahlonaga Funeral Home, where boxes are custom-packed for each family. Contents are based on the number of adults and children in the household. Recipes are included, and sometimes a coloring book for the kids, sometimes extra food items for later in the week. Families pick up the food in time to defrost the turkey and cook the meal.

"I think it is important for families to have their own traditions around holidays in their own homes," said Enich. "That's why we decided to make this project a 'take and bake.'"

Nomination forms for families to receive this year's Thanksgiving meal can be obtained by calling 678-845-8771, or by emailing ThankfulHeartsLC@gmail.com.

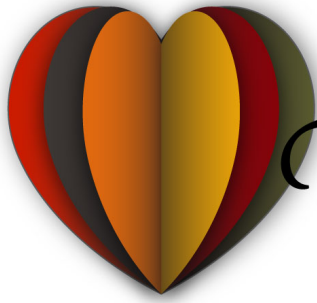
Nominations can be made anonymously. Families must be residents of Lumpkin County.

Donors can choose to sponsor one or more families or contribute any amount. A donation form can be downloaded from **Thankful** HeartsLC.wordpress.com, and donations can be made online at Fundly.com for **Thankful Hearts** Take-N-Bake 2015.

Both donations and nominations are appreciated by Oct. 31, said Enich. **Thankful Hearts** Take-N-Bake is a 501C3 nonprofit through the Dahlonaga-Lumpkin County Community Foundation. Other members of the team of organizers are Laura James, Stefani Logsdon, Molly Jackson and Michele Granger.

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Thankful Hearts

Thanksgiving groceries for folks who 'need a little help'

Author(s): Margo Booth

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For the fourth year in a row, six local women are making it a personal project to deliver a bake-it-at-home Thanksgiving basket (including a frozen turkey, ham, stuffing and more – even dessert) to needy local families.

Amberly Enich, Brigitte Barker, Laura James, Michele Granger, Molly Jackson and Stefani Logsdon make up the team behind **Thankful Hearts** Take-N-Bake. The ladies are willing to do the legwork—handling the applications, shopping and organizing volunteers to pack up the food, but they need community-wide support to help locate families who could use the help, and to fund their project.

When Amberly Enich was growing up her dad worked long, hard hours; while they “never went without,” feeding the family was often a struggle. And when holidays rolled around, especially holidays centered around food—which put added stress on the family’s tight budget. “This is a simple concept,” said Enich. “Collect groceries—Thanksgiving turkeys with all the trimmings—and distribute them to families who need a little help. Every family should be able to celebrate Thanksgiving in their own home with their family around them, and it should not be a financial burden for them to do so,” she said. “Something like this would have been such a blessing to my own family.”

This year the program is expanding into Dawson County, as there have been a number of applicants from there in past years. “We are counting on the support of Dawson businesses to help make this expansion possible,” said Enich. **Thankful Hearts’** goal is to raise \$5600 this year and to feed 75 families—up from 59 last year.

“We have had amazing feedback from recipients,” said Enich. “We get letters and emails, and some families are in tears when they pick up their meals,” she said. “They appreciate the chance to enjoy their Thanksgiving dinners with their own families, in their own homes, and not with people they don’t know.”

Thankful Hearts collects donations from businesses, groups and individuals. Contributions and nominations come from social media contacts, friends and family, word of mouth and Nugget readers. It costs approximately \$75 to feed a family of six, said Enich. Donors can choose to sponsor one or more families or contribute any amount; donations can be made online at Fundly.com for **Thankful Hearts** Take N Bake 2016.

At the same time money is being collected, applications are being taken for those who might need the food. Anyone can nominate a family. “You can nominate yourself or anyone you know,” said Enich, who personally calls every nominee to discuss their situation. “The people we want to help may not qualify for government assistance or other food programs,” she said. They may just be struggling to put food on the table right now, and would really appreciate the opportunity to serve a special holiday meal to their families,” she said.

Nomination forms for families to receive this year’s Thanksgiving meal can be obtained by calling 678-845-8771, or by emailing ThankfulHeartsLC@gmail.com.

You can nominate yourself or anyone you know. Nominations can be made anonymously. Nominated families must be residents of Lumpkin or Dawson county, and first-time applicants will be given priority.

Both donations and nominations are appreciated by Oct. 31, said Enich; the approval process takes place the first week of November. **Thankful Hearts** Take-N-Bake is a 501C3 nonprofit under the umbrella of Lumpkin County Family Connection.

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