

A Story of Compassion

USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Knox Presbyterian Church

Santa Rosa, California

Ms. Carmen Duran's family, like many others in the Santa Rosa area, is struggling with the reality of not being able to provide food for her family. Ms. Duran is a single disabled parent with four children: Marycarmen, 12; Julia, 10; Maria-Isabel, 5; Guadalupe, 4; and niece Yuliana Duran, 7 months. This year the Duran family was happy to learn Knox Presbyterian Church would be offering free lunches to all community children.

Marycarmen, the oldest daughter, learned about the summer food program from a flyer posted on the school's bulletin board. What caught Marycarmen's attention on the flyer was that Knox Presbyterian Church was offering free lunches to all community children. Marycarmen and her sisters soon joined other community children at lunchtime at the Knox Presbyterian Church. According to Marycarmen, "Knox Presbyterian Church provides lunches to kids whose parents can't afford to buy food..." and "...the program is great for the less fortunate families who have limited amount of food to eat." Marycarmen believes that if it wasn't for Knox Presbyterian Church summer food program and activities, some of the community children would probably be involved in gang activities, steal from the neighborhood, or go without meals.

Marycarmen's mother is appreciative of the summer food program. To show her appreciation to the church for providing free meals, Ms. Duran volunteers at the church to serve the summer meal. Knowing that her children will eat healthy meals throughout the summer fills Ms.



Duran with joy and relieves some stress, "Knowing my children will eat at least one good meal a day eliminates a lot of the pressure on me because I don't have to wonder where the children's lunch will come from." In addition, Ms. Duran believes that the meals served at the church are a good opportunity to introduced new foods to children that are healthy to the body, and contribute to good eating habits. Ms. Duran is also appreciative of the Santa Rosa Food Bank for giving out a variety of food packages to help families supplement their diets with foods not normally available at her home.

Marycarmen is in the 8th grade at Willowside Middle School, and one of the activities she enjoys the most after eating lunch at the Knox Presbyterian Church is arts and crafts. She helps her younger sisters make beaded necklaces and bracelets. When asked about her most favorite meal at the summer site, she replied, "teriyaki chicken and rice is my favorite." She also added, I eat whatever the church gives me and never whine. I'm just thankful and happy for what I can eat."



A Story of Compassion

USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

How the Initiative is Helping

Early in 2005, church members surveyed the surrounding neighborhood to find out what the needs were and how the church could help the community address those needs. The biggest concern raised by parents was getting food for the children. In support of the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI), the FNS Western Regional Offices worked with the Santa Rosa Redwood Empire Food Bank to expand the SFSP in the city of Santa Rosa, CA and throughout Sonoma County. Additionally, in support of FBCI, the Western Region Special Nutrition Program has encouraged expansion of summer meal service participation to more faith and community organizations. Knox Presbyterian Church members were referred to the Food Bank by an agency that had heard about the Food Bank's efforts to provide free summer meals to needy children. Once church members found out how the SFSP operates, they decided to participate as a feeding site.

Bev Hawkyard, the church site supervisor, was happy that the church was able to provide meals to the children. She happily stated "Feeding the children at the church is a great way to ensure they are eating a healthy meal for the day, and knowing the children look forward to returning for meals on scheduled days is a great reward." During lunchtime, church volunteers help serve meals, monitor the site, socialize with children and parents, and assist children with arts and crafts. As for the Knox Presbyterian Church, there is only one meaningful reward:

...serving the community without asking for anything in return.

About the Organization

"Opening wide our hearts and door, offering love and welcome in the name of Jesus Christ"

Knox Presbyterian Church has 42 years of experience in serving the community, and serves a congregation of approximately 85 members. The church provides resources to families on an ongoing basis, and has developed a partnership with the neighborhood to address the needs of the community.

Knox Presbyterian Church is a small congregation with community focus to enhance the livelihoods of families with limited resources. Knox Presbyterian Church provides a variety of community services such as educational activities, childcare for parents attending English improvement classes, provide volunteers to staff a local food pantry to help package food, collect money, gifts, toys, and food for the local abused women and children shelter, and in 2005, serve as a summer site to provide free lunches to community children.

