

Community feeds body, soul this holiday season

Volunteers will gather to spread Thanksgiving cheer this Thursday at the Whiteaker School

By Emma Juhlin
Freelance Reporter

The 15th-annual free Thanksgiving community dinner at Whiteaker School has been being prepared for months, and it's still not quite done. The event is organized by nonprofit group Whiteaker Community Dinners, and the community comes together every year to make the dinner happen.

"Our slogan is neighbors helping neighbors," said Beverly Farfan, the head organizer of the dinner. "It's run totally by volunteers — I'm a volunteer."

A group of 10 people, headed by Farfan, gets together at the beginning of November to start planning the dinner, which generally serves more than 2,500 people. Different businesses in the community donate to the meal. Some local businesses that donate food are Emerald Fruit and Produce Co. Inc., Organically Grown Co-op, the Korean Presbyterian Church of Eugene, Lochmead Dairy, Fenton and Lee Confections and Full City Coffee Roasters. Many bakeries also provide rolls. Most of the cooking is done ahead of time by the students of the Culinary Arts Program at Lane Community College.

The 210 turkeys needed for the event are provided by the Teamsters Union Local 206 in Springfield, as well as other local unions. The Teamsters Union has been working with the Whiteaker School for eight years, donating manpower and

money to the Thanksgiving dinner cause. According to Stephen Ostrach, a local Teamsters Union representative, each year the group transports an average of 2,100 pounds of turkeys from Cash and Carry to the Whiteaker School. Ostrach coordinates the Teamsters' involvement with the dinners each year.

"It seemed like a good way to do something for the community," he said.

Other groups that contribute to the cost of the turkeys include the Amalgamated Transit Union, the National Association of Letter Carriers, the Carpenters Local 1273, the Eugene Newspaper Guild, and the Lane County Labor Council. This year, monetary contributions totaled \$1,638.

The monetary donations are not all that keep the Whiteaker School filling hungry stomachs each Thanksgiving. There are about 600 volunteers each year, and most of them are assigned two hour shifts, which, according to Farfan, gives people an opportunity to meet each other and help on an emotional level.

"The dinner feeds the body, but we want to feed the heart and soul," Farfan said.

Student Chris Gamman volunteered in 2001 and plans to go again this year.

"It's one day of the year of service, and I think maybe as a good community member I should be doing more of that," he said. "I think Eugene is, for a lot of students, a place where you come to school and maybe make contributions to the University, but don't think about the community in which all of us live and work and study."



Members of the Teamsters Union Local 206 lent a helping hand preparing for last year's Thanksgiving community dinner at the Whiteaker School.

Many students who are from out of town and away from their families come to the dinner to volunteer, Farfan said.

who have no place to go," Farfan said. "People who have money come. I've had people who are homeless call from pay phones who want to volunteer."

shots. There is also a room where people can look through clothes, sleeping bags, tents, tarps and other items that people and businesses in the community have donated.

"Last year somebody dropped off buckets and buckets of roses," Farfan said. According to Farfan, one of the volunteers who was talking to a family saw the roses and gave one to a little girl. The girl said she had never been given a flower before. Farfan said that is the kind of thing that compels her and the other organizers of the event to get together every year and start planning the next dinner.

This year's dinner is Thursday,

Nov. 27, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Whiteaker School, located at 21 N. Grand St. People who need a ride can either call in and be picked up by one of the many volunteer drivers, or they can go to the Whitebird Clinic or St. Vincent DePaul Service Station where a shuttle will come every hour. For more information contact Whiteaker Community Dinners at 485-8179. Donations can be dropped off Wednesday, Nov. 26 from noon to 7 p.m. at Windermere Real Estate at 1610 Oak St. and 525 Harlow Rd., or at the dinner.

Emma Juhlin is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

"We have quite a few people who have no place to go."

Beverly Farfan
Organizer, Whiteaker Thanksgiving dinner

People come to the dinner for many reasons, whether it's to volunteer, eat a hot meal or have company during the holidays.

"We have quite a few people

Throughout the dinner people enjoy live music and children's games and activities. Two nurses from McKenzie-Willamette Hospital also attend the dinner to give flu

AMIGOS

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nancial counseling and more.

"Signing a peace treaty does not solve the problem," said Nieto-Maquehue, referring to the aftermath of war crimes.

"We try to recreate the feeling of a family for those who no longer have one," said Ruth Foreman, the organization's clinical director.

Amigos de los Sobrevivientes is the only organization of its kind operating out of a residential location. The building is a two-story house where members can do anything from work in the garden to participate in weekly group therapy sessions. Foreman said the intent of such a setting is to allow participants to feel that they are in a community, not an institutional establishment.

"Everyone here has a voice," Nieto-Maquehue

said. "We are very alternatively organized. I may be the 'executive director,' but we make sure that decisions are made by everyone."

The organization relies solely on volunteers, many of whom come from the University. Two weeks ago, students gathered in the EMU with Amigos members and helped set up an art gallery for El Día de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead). The holiday honors family members who have passed away in the Hispanic community, an important occasion for Amigos members who have had no closure for their past. Students come to the program to improve their Spanish, and in doing so end up helping a lot of people according to Nieto-Maquehue.

"They help us, and we help them," Nieto-Maquehue said. "This is the beauty of reciprocity."

Athanasios Fkiaras is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

Break yields needed rest

Despite the possibility of Thanksgiving away from family, students laud a little free time before final exams

By Kyle Harris
Freelance Reporter

With Thanksgiving just around the corner, some University students are dealing with the stress that comes with knowing that they won't be able to go home for one of the most family-oriented holidays of the year.

Many out-of-state students find that it is too hard to make it home for a long weekend with the family. Some students say they can't afford it, and others say the turnaround time is just too quick.

Staying in the residence halls during Thanksgiving can be quite a lonely experience.

"The residence halls are pretty empty," said Keisha Janney, a resident assistant in the Barnhart/Riley Complex. "Many residents live close enough to Eugene to travel home easily."

For many freshmen, especially those who dealt with homesickness earlier in the year, the Thanksgiving holiday is a welcome respite — an opportunity to relax and see family before finals.

Kim Wilshire, who won't be able to go home for Thanksgiving, isn't looking forward to a long weekend in H.P. Barnhart Hall.

"I have no idea what I am going to be doing," she said. "I don't know Eugene at all. I'm pretty sad."

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