

Feeding a community

By Jennifer Colton
Go! Magazine

HERMISTON — Volunteers will spend two weeks this month cooking and carving 100 turkeys, mashing thousands of potatoes, and preparing enough vegetables, rolls and dessert to serve a community on Thanksgiving.

For the second year in a row, volunteers will not be able to sit down with guests for a hot meal, but they'll still do what they can to make sure anyone in the Hermiston area who needs a Thanksgiving meal gets one through the Community Fellowship Dinner. With lingering uncertainty about the COVID-19 pandemic, the event board decided to repeat the process of heat-and-serve meals again this year.

"It's hard because the first two words in our name are 'commu-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
John Lauck handed out Thanksgiving meals at the drive-thru Community Fellowship Dinner in 2020. The event will again be a takeout dinner on Thursday, Nov. 25.

nity' and 'fellowship,' and there isn't much fellowship going on with this model," Chairman Gary Humphreys said. "We start planning in August and September, and with rumors of shutdowns, we had to make a decision, and that was to repeat the process from last year. We are still serving the community."

Hermiston's Community Fellowship Dinner began in 1982 to give anyone in the community — residents or those passing through — a place to enjoy a meal and be with others on holidays. Before COVID-19, volunteers served guests a hot meal and could sit and talk with them, but the program has shifted to takeout meals the guests can warm up

Community Fellowship Dinners to serve takeout Thanksgiving meals

and eat with their friends or family.

Last year, with many community members unable to travel, the events served a record 2,300 meals between Thanksgiving and Christmas — 500 more than they had in the past. Humphreys said they expect numbers to be down a little this year, but they will prepare extra meals — just in case.

"We want to serve as many people as possible. We always have plenty of food," he said.

Volunteers are spending most of this month preparing about 1,200 individual dinners with turkey, mashed potatoes, vegetables, a roll and dessert. The meals will be available for pick up from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day at Hermiston High School. No registration is required, and anyone can drive up and pick up a meal for each person in their household.

Limited meal delivery is avail-

able and must be scheduled before 7 p.m. on Nov. 24. To arrange delivery, call 541-571-1337.

That's also the number for anyone interested in volunteering. Humphreys said they are looking for volunteers to pitch in before and during the event, and donations are appreciated. The nonprofit operates on volunteers and donations.

A Community Fellowship Dinner — also heat-and-serve — is also planned for Christmas Day. With 2022 being the 40th anniversary, Humphreys says they plan on returning to the full community fellowship next year.

"Our goal is to have live people in the building and having a hot meal together next year," he said. "That's what we want."

More information is available on the Facebook page for Community Fellowship Dinner — Hermiston.

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