

SEEDS OF HOPE

a Newsletter from Outreach for Hope Inc.

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Volunteer, Rick Tillis, picking up food for program at Florist Ave. L.C.



RESCUED FOOD FEEDS AND FUELS NEW MINISTRY PASSION

When Rick Tillis arrives at St. Matthew's at his assigned time on Monday mornings he knows just where to go. Three-quarters of the way down the lower level hallway on the right-hand side is a sign taped to the wall with one hand-written word: "Florist." "Florist" is Florist Avenue Lutheran Church at N. 40th in Milwaukee, a church funded by Outreach for Hope. At Florist Rick helps run the Community Outreach program on Saturday mornings. Piled underneath the sign at St. Matthew's are boxes of food. The boxes include bakery, produce, and pans of food already cooked and ready to heat and serve.



Volunteers assemble meals each week

Every half hour on Monday morning a different church representative arrives, finds the hand written sign for his or her congregation, snags one of the carts, and loads up the food to take to their church for a week of outreach ministry, accented by quality, healthy food. A half hour after Rick Tillis leaves, Eddie Brooks arrives to pick up the food for Capitol Drive Lutheran Church at 52nd St. and Capitol, another Outreach for Hope sponsored congregation. He delivers the food to the Sherman Park Gathering Place, run by Capitol Drive in their church. Thirteen ministries in all receive food each week through "Just One More," part of the meal outreach ministry of St. Matthew's

Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa.

It started with a box of bread

The ministry that brings the collection of church representatives to St. Matthew's each Monday morning began four years ago with a box of bread which St. Matthew's member, Chris Capper, was asked to take from St. Matthew's to Reformation Lutheran Church at 35th and North Avenue in Milwaukee. With his experience in the food industry and skill in networking, that box full of bread inspired Chris to help St. Matthew's begin a 'food rescue' ministry. Each week Chris and his volunteers 'rescue' 600-700 bakery items, 1000 pounds of produce, and enough previously prepared food to package into 1500 meals.

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“We have only scratched the surface”

St. Matthew’s, located in Wauwatosa, is not a congregation you might expect to be a recipient of an Outreach for Hope grant. But when Chris Capper began to ‘rescue’ food from restaurants, bakeries, and grocery stores, which had been designated to be thrown away, it was clear that God was opening a whole new door, and so far it is open just a crack. Pastor Chris Manke, lead pastor at St. Matthews, observed, “We have only scratched the surface in gathering the food that is available to feed people, and would otherwise be thrown away.”

The staff and leadership of St. Matthew’s put their full effort into beginning to respond to the potential. The church and its members have made a substantial financial commitment to the program and the infrastructure needed to run a successful and safe food program. Foundations and organizations, including the Siebert Lutheran Foundation, have been crucial to the start-up. Outreach for Hope also awarded a grant for the start-up. Not only is this ministry opening new doors, but each of the ministries receiving food, rescued weekly by the St. Matthew’s team, is directly or indirectly associated with Outreach for Hope.

Rick Tillis knows what a difference the “Just One More” meal outreach

ministry makes for the mission of Florist Avenue Lutheran Church. He said, “We were trying to feed 20-30 people on Saturday, many of them children. Now with the food we receive from the Meal Outreach Ministry we have as many as 50 people attending and more adults.”



Program Director-Chris Capper

1500 Meals Assembled each week

Part of the Monday morning activity at St. Matthew’s is to gather the food that has been rescued from caterers and restaurants over the weekend.

An assembly team of volunteers gathers to put together aluminum meal containers with entrées, vegetables, and potato or pasta. Capper estimates that the 1500 meals which get prepared and sent out each week could be expanded to 4500 meals a week. The estimated cost, mostly for storage and delivery, is \$.98 a meal.

A Model Others Can Use

“It’s a win-win-win for everyone,” says Pastor Manke. “Food that would be wasted is put to use; the ministry partners we have developed in this program are blessed with additional food they can share with the community; and St. Matthew’s is filled with excitement as volunteers step forward to help be part of something that is forward looking.” Manke cast a vision of what that future might look like: an Advisory Board of the various ministries could help their programs be more creative; the meal outreach ministry would be financially self-sustaining; and both Pastor Manke and Chris Capper expressed the hope that this model can be replicated in other communities around the country.

When Eddie Brooks volunteered to pick up the food for Capitol Drive Church he responded, “How can I not help,

with how God has blessed me through all my health issues? In every part of this meal program everyone is giving in some way. And everyone is blessed.”

“I used to worry we would not have enough food,” said Chris Capper with a smile. “I quit worrying and the food kept coming. God is good!”

Wrapped by Joy

When the prepared food arrives from area restaurants it needs to be packed and stored in the large freezers that St. Matthew’s installed for their meal outreach ministry. When the food is all packaged it gets wrapped by Joy with large institutional rolls of plastic wrap.

Joy Craig is employed 25 hours a week by the “Just One More” ministry. She first came to the ministry as a volunteer. But it was clear that Joy had a passion for this gathering of food to be shared with those who need it. After seven months of volunteering she was hired on as staff.



Joy’s sense of calling was partly inspired by what she saw in the volunteers around her from St. Matthew’s, and visiting with the volunteers that came to pick up food for the other churches. That, and encouragement by the program director, Chris Capper, led Joy to become a regular worshipper at All Peoples Church, along with three of her siblings.

Joy’s inspiration has led her to another step. She began a meal ministry in her own neighborhood that shares food with six families. Like Jesus blessing the loaves and fishes to feed 5000, Joy is part of the miraculous work God is doing through St. Matthews and the churches and individuals with whom they partner.



Volunteer, Eddie Brooks, loading ‘rescued’ food for Capitol Dr.