Thanksgiving Heavy on the Giving in Kodiak

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Thursday is Thanksgiving – a day rooted in gratefulness but often centered on magnificent meals. But for some Kodiak families, creating the stereotypical turkey dinner isn’t very feasible, or affordable. For those in need, a number of community organizations have stepped up to the plate and will provide meals or ingredients to help make sure every family, no matter their budget, can enjoy the holiday.

The concept of helping those less fortunate around Thanksgiving time isn’t new, especially for the American Legion. Club Manager Helen Hartman said the Legion has served Thanksgiving dinner to the community for more than 40 years.

“We have all the trimmings – turkey, ham, stuffing, gravy, potatoes, rolls. The Auxillary donates pies. We get most of our turkeys all donated from some people from the community and also our Legion members bring in turkeys and hams.”

The dinner is free and open to the whole community, and Hartman said folks can stop by and eat between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Pat Branson is the executive director at the Kodiak Senior Center and said the Legion also packages up to-go dinners for seniors in the community. She said Senior Center staff will pick up the meals from the Legion on Thanksgiving Day and deliver them to seniors that need a meal and can’t necessarily leave home to get one.

Another holiday dining option is available at the Brother Francis Shelter. Executive Director Monte Hawver said they’ll be holding their free Thanksgiving meal around 8:30 p.m.

“Yes. Again this year, as they have for 21 years, the Coast Guard Spouses Association is going to host our Thanksgiving dinner. And it will be held Thanksgiving evening. And in most cases about 30 people attend, but anybody is welcome. And they always put on a great feed for the homeless and the working poor. And we really appreciate them being willing to do that again this year.”

For those who would like to cook their own meals, the Kodiak Island Food Bank will be providing some necessities to families, as well as staying open on Thanksgiving. Kelli Foreman works with public education for the Kodiak Baptist Mission, which owns and operates the food bank. She said the food bank received a grant this year to purchase frozen turkeys and distribute them in the community.

“So we’re really hoping that that will supply each family that comes to our food bank with a turkey this Thanksgiving. Alex is also planning on being open on Thanksgiving day from 12 p.m. until 4 p.m. for families that need just a Thanksgiving meal or some extra support there.”

Foreman said the Food Bank serves roughly 350 families, and they have turkeys for just about all of them. That’s a lot of turkeys, and Foreman said it was definitely hard to find space in the freezer for them.

“We had this huge shipment that came in and we did a lot of rearranging and lots of cold hands, but we’re grateful to do it. And it is really neat to be able to hand out an extra turkey. And people in Kodiak, our community here, just absolutely incredible. Nobody takes it like we deserve this or we need this, it’s always out of so much gratitude and thanks which is really neat to see happen here.”

Foreman said the Food Bank has also seen an increase in donations recently, and she’s grateful that the community chips in during the holidays, when the bank’s usage is often higher.