

¿Que Pasa?

Pajaro Valley Loaves & Fishes Newsletter

Winter 2007

Letter from the Director – A Look Back at 2006

In 2006, Loaves and Fishes witnessed an over 14% increase in the need for emergency food assistance. We distributed 190,000 pounds of groceries in almost 4,000 client pantry visits and served nearly 15,000 meals through our lunch program, including over 200 special holiday meals. Dozens of volunteers of all ages assisted us in serving our clients with compassion and respect.

We were 80% community-funded in 2006, receiving generous donations from local individuals, organizations, and businesses. We also raised 10% more through our Empty Bowls fundraiser than last year. These contributions sustained us throughout the year; we did not have to borrow on our line of credit as in previous years. In addition, many community supporters contributed funds to finance the construction of a new permanent dining shelter, and a generous donor significantly reduced our mortgage debt.

We were pleased to be honored as “Organization of the Year 2006” by the Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce. I would like to acknowledge and thank former director Phil Fisher and our 2006 Board members – Bob Montague, Liz Phair, Dave DeBoer, Corrine Flanagan, Janet Mahoney, and Willy Elliott-McCrea – for their dedicated service to Loaves and Fishes. We share this award with you - our community donors, volunteers, and supporters. I was proud to accept the award on behalf of the organization at the Chamber’s 45th Annual Awards Dinner on January 27th.

This winter, we added two more members to our Board of Directors - Tom O’Brien and Raeid Farhat. Tom brings valuable expertise to the Board, from his career in the mental health field. He also assists with the weekly food bank shopping. Raeid is a local realtor and president of Raeid Farhat Real Estate Inc. He got involved with Loaves and Fishes this holiday season, volunteering and donating food. A long-time local resident, Raeid brings valuable local knowledge and connections to the Board.

We are now in our 18th year of service to the Pajaro Valley community. With two recent plant closures in Watsonville, we expect to see a continued increase in the local need for emergency food assistance. We hope that you will join us again this year in our work feeding, supporting, and serving our community. Thank you for your support.

Brooke Johnson

Students learn by serving at Loaves and Fishes

This past Fall, executive director Brooke Johnson established service-learning partnerships with Moreland Notre Dame School and Mount Madonna School, to educate local students about hunger in our community and actively involve them in our hunger relief efforts. Brooke made presentations to the students at both schools and coordinated with Sister Virginia Unger, service-



Moreland Notre Dame students Maciel Chavez, Paige Nethercutt, and Ricky Ibarra serve lunch at Loaves and Fishes

learning coordinator at Moreland Notre Dame, and Sephy Elizai, service-learning teacher at Mount Madonna, to involve their students in our programs.

Both schools are conducting on-going paper bag drives, to keep our pantry supplied with sturdy grocery bags. The seventh grade class from Mount Madonna visited Loaves and Fishes in December to assist us in distributing toiletries and winter jackets, caps, and other warm clothing to our lunch clients. The Moreland Notre Dame 8th grade students volunteer at Loaves and Fishes once a week. Sister Virginia and the students help serve the noontime meal, and then eat lunch and visit with the clients. When they return to school, they reflect on their experiences:

“I did not know there were that many needy people in Watsonville ... just normal people who need help. It gave me a lot of satisfaction to help those people and, yes, it was a challenge to me especially when I listened to Debbie. Her story made me think, how could that nice woman be homeless.” - Nicole

“What I learned from this experience was don’t judge people on how they look because it is what is in their hearts that counts. Even though the poor people didn’t have a lot they were still smiling. We had a great conversation with one man ... he had just found an apartment.” - Jenna Marie

“I liked that we were able to serve directly to the people. I saw God’s goodness through Maria and her helpers. Also through Brooke and how she interacted with people. I could tell that the people who work there put their heart into it. I also saw that there is a community between the people who come.” - Iva

These reflections illustrate that the service-learning partnerships are changing students’ perceptions about people in need and providing a meaningful service experience. We thank Sister Virginia Unger and Sephy Elizai for involving their students in our work.



Driscoll's employee Debbie Guerrero (center) brings a donation of toiletries for our homeless clients to Bob Montague and Brooke Johnson

Holiday Thank You's

With the generous donations we received from local businesses, organizations, and individual donors, we were able to make it a much happier holiday for our clients. We extend special thanks to:

Kelley Bell, Laura Webster, Emmett Linder, John Siletto, Linda Moore, and Gloria Chillon of Driscoll's Berry Associates for coordinating a Winter Drive to benefit our lunch program clients, and all the Driscoll's employees who generously contributed to the effort. They donated winter jackets, toiletries, blankets, sleeping bags, See's candy, and Christmas stockings, which we distributed on Christmas Day;

Toys for Tots, Holy Eucharist Catholic Community, Omega Nu, Watsonville Community

Hospital Emergency Room, Couch Distributing, and Valley Churches United Missions for donating new toys for the children we serve through our pantry, and Toys for Tots for donating seven refurbished bicycles to clients of our lunch program;

All of the volunteers who helped bag and distribute food and toys for our Christmas Distribution and serve Christmas Day lunch. We provided Christmas food baskets and toys to 175 local families in need and a hearty Christmas meal for over 100 hungry community members; and

All of the donors who contributed money to Loaves and Fishes either directly or through the Good Times Community Fund Holiday Drive. We raised over \$11,000 through the Good Times Fund Drive, which will be matched in part by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

We thank you all for joining us in our efforts this holiday season. We truly appreciate the support that we receive from the local community, both during the holidays and throughout the year.

Acknowledgment
This issue of Que Pasa was funded in part by a generous donation from Jean and Dan Johnson.
We thank you for your support!!

Help feed, support, and serve our community!

Join us in the fight against hunger in our community. Every \$1 donated provides 1.3 meals for the hungry people in the Pajaro Valley. Please consider making a monthly donation - \$15 a month provides 234 meals to our neighbors in need throughout the year. We have enclosed a donation envelope for your convenience.

Donations received in March and April will help qualify Loaves and Fishes to receive a portion of the funds being distributed through the 10th Annual Feinstein \$1 Million Challenge to Fight Hunger. The more funds we raise, the more we will receive from Feinstein Challenge, one of the most successful grassroots campaigns to fight hunger.

We thank you for your support.

YES! I want to join Loaves and Fishes in the fight against hunger in Pajaro Valley, with a donation of:

- \$15 \$25 \$50
- \$100 \$250 Other \$ _____




LOAVES & FISHES
 Food Pantry & Kitchen
 150 Second Street
 Watsonville, CA 95076
 (831) 722-4144

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