



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE COUNTY COMMUNITIES GIVE BACK FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Uniontown, PA – It's the season of giving, and Fayette County organizations and individuals have embraced the spirit of generosity, providing clothes, toys and food for those who are less fortunate or simply in need of some holiday cheer.

One such organization, Connellsville Area Community Ministries (CACM), hosted a community Christmas dinner on Dec. 17 at the Connellsville Senior Center. CACM Development Coordinator Mary Sampey said the event has been years in the making.

"We've been wanting to have a Christmas dinner for a long time, but it was kind of one of those things where it was like, 'if we ever have the money,'" Sampey said.

She said the dinner has been an unfulfilled dream over the past four years, while the organization has been raising money via its annual Heart to Hope telethon. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, she noted, Connellsville Area Community Ministries started providing daily summer meals for school children and decided it was time to begin reaching for some of its other goals.

"We thought we really need to step out in faith and do some extra stuff," she said.

Last year, CACM teamed with Sparks Catering to provide home-delivered meals, but this year, with people once more gathering in person, the organization decided to make its dream of a sit-down community dinner a reality.

"We really wanted to do something bigger," Sampey said. "This is kind of our way of thanking the city, number one, for giving so much to us, and number two, for people to see where their money goes when they donate to the Heart to Hope telethon, that their money is going back into the community."

Sampey said the dinner, which included 800 sit-down meals as well as 200 pre-ordered delivery meals, was catered by Sparks Catering and included ham, parsley potatoes, carrots, green beans, coleslaw, rolls, cake and soft drinks. The meals were free and available on a first-come, first-served basis, with a sit-down dinner and two takeout meals allowed for each person. Treat bags were given to all.

She said a host of volunteers helped with serving and delivering the meals, including Somerset Trust Company, Connellsville Area High School's National Honor Society, and the school's cheerleading squad and boys and girls basketball teams. The high school chamber ensemble provided musical entertainment, and Santa Claus was on hand.

Sampey said the goal is for the dinner to become an annual event. "We would love to. We didn't know what this year was going to bring because this is definitely our learning year. We're just so grateful," she said of the community's support for the telethon and the organization itself. "If we keep doing this, maybe it will become our thing and something that people look forward to every year."

Among other Fayette County individuals and organizations giving back this holiday season are:

- Ed Higinbotham, a 96-year-old Georges Township man who uses his woodworking skills to make hand-crafted toys for children each year. Since beginning the tradition in the 1980s, Higinbotham has donated about 700 wooden toys to local kids.
- Indian Head Church of God in Indian Head, which collected donations of Christmas gifts for local nursing home residents.
- The Community Network Team and Fayette EMS, which partnered for a Stuff-An-Ambulance event to provide toys and necessities for Plans of Safe Care families.
- Fayette County Children and Youth Services in Uniontown, which sponsored a Stuff-A-Sleigh toy and gift drive on Dec. 8. The gifts will go toward brightening the holidays of Fayette County children.
- Clinton Church of God in Normalville, which held a free ham dinner on Dec. 10.
- Rizz's in Uniontown, which held a Toys for Tots benefit on Dec. 13. The restaurant offered a 10% discount for patrons who contributed a new, unwrapped toy.

These are just a sampling of the joy and generosity spreading throughout Fayette County communities this holiday season.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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For more information, contact Kristi Kassimer Harper, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Jamie Rankin, Journalist, at 724-434-4486, jamierankin13@gmail.com.