



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 24, 2021

THANKSGIVING GENEROSITY LEADS TO 'FACES AND PLACES' DISTINCTION

Uniontown, PA – It's that time once again when Americans sit down with family members, friends and loved ones to share a meal and express their gratitude for all of the good things in their lives.

Unfortunately, too many people have no one with whom to share a Thanksgiving dinner, or no place to go to eat it. Some have friends and family but no way to afford such a dinner. Fayette County residents in those circumstances still can enjoy fellowship and a hot meal, courtesy of county agencies, neighborhood and religious organizations, and their own communities. The generosity of those organizations has earned them the Fayette County Faces and Places distinction for November.

Members of the Fayette Chamber of Commerce organize a turkey drive for local families each year, partnering with the Fayette County Community Action Agency Food Bank to distribute the turkeys.

"I'm guessing it's been at least 15 years (that the turkey drive has been in existence)," Chamber of Commerce Board member and food drive chairperson Chris Kennedy said. "It could even be longer. Initially, it started out as a food drive."

Kennedy explained that the chamber would hold an in-person food drive, giving out a wider variety of foods, each fall at Adrian's Market before the Hopwood store closed its doors several years ago. It then metamorphosed into the turkey drive as it is today.

"Now, it's basically just a turkey drive," he said. "By the same token, if the food bank needs some help throughout the year, the chamber has the capability of making monetary donations if so needed."

Kennedy said the turkey drive's organizers accept donations from any business or individual, though most of the money is raised through chamber membership. A turkey can be sponsored for \$10, and Kennedy said the birds weigh about 12 pounds each.

"We always hope that we get at least 100, and we generally meet that every year," Kennedy said.

He noted that the chamber reached that goal once again this year, with a little bit of help from Lady Luck Casino, which raised some funds and donated the money toward the turkey drive.

Kennedy said the chamber purchases the turkeys at Riverside Family Market in Grindstone, where Adam Giles has been very generous to the drive.

“He only charges us his cost for the turkeys,” Kennedy said.

Once the turkeys are purchased, they are picked up by food bank representatives and distributed to county families in need.

Food bank Project Manager David Bork said there are no sign-ups and no eligibility requirements families need to meet. In most cases, they already are in the county’s database.

“We typically utilize our other programs - our nurse-family partnership, the WIC program, our senior program,” Bork said. “Those programs are a little more limited in number. They’re still clients that are in need.”

Bork said once the turkeys are picked up, they are distributed to client families as workers meet with them.

He said the food bank also participates in the KDKA turkey drive.

“We send out gift cards from Giant Eagle to all of our pantry clients in the month of November,” he said.

Bork said the food bank also partners with local Catholic churches for a mass food distribution, which gives out frozen hams, a bag and a box of dry goods, produce, fresh milk, butter, cheese and eggs to families around the area.

Kennedy emphasized that turkeys from the chamber drive help Fayette County families.

“It’s always set up that everything we do is in Fayette County,” he said. “One hundred percent of what we do and collect stays in Fayette County.”

A few other organizations are helping county residents this Thanksgiving, too. Masontown Community Kitchen hosted its annual free Thanksgiving dinner on Nov. 23, serving up turkey, ham and all the trimmings.

Solid Rock Ministries in Uniontown will host a free traditional Thanksgiving meal on Thursday.

And in Connellsville, about 750 diners are expected to turn out for the city’s community Thanksgiving dinner at its senior center.

Connellsville Mayor Greg Lincoln said the meal has been held annually for more than 20 years, with City Church of Connellsville currently overseeing the organization of the event. Other churches in the community donate and volunteer, he said.

The meal is dine-in, but there also are volunteers on hand to deliver dinners to those who can’t or don’t want to leave their homes.

Lincoln called the dinner a “really wonderful, wonderful community thing” and said the city is grateful to City Church and all of the volunteers.

“I feel it’s one of the most important events that we have all year long,” he said. “We have a lot of people that depend on it.”

Local partners joining together in an effort to support Fayette County families is just another reason to be thankful this holiday season.

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

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This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the 2016 Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

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