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FEATURED

Soup Kitchen Celebrates 25 Years

By Jacob Sisneros SUN Staff Writer 5 hrs ago



San Martin de Porres Soup Kitchen Board Members Theodora Valdez (left), Chris Morris (back), Kristen Trujillo, Erlinda Quintana and Suzan Roybal celebrate the kitchen's 25 year anniversary, July 13.

(Courtesy of Kristen Trujillo)

The San Martin de Porres Soup Kitchen celebrated 25 years of serving the community, July 13, with all three of its founding sisters in attendance.

Theodora Valdez, 75, Erlinda Quintana, 75, and Suzan Roybal, 67, decided to start a soup kitchen, after taking a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Ugoslavia, in 1989.

During their 10-day trip, they got an opportunity to meet the Pope and when they got back, they decided to put their catering experience to good use.

Expect delays on N.M. 68 August-November.



“When we got back to Española we had a mission,” Valdez said.

The sisters started distributing food out of recreational halls three days a week, until they were able to set up shop in MG Hall, in Ranchitos, in July 1992.

Quintana and Roybal prepared all the food in their kitchen because they had a licensed catering service.

After 16 months in MG Hall, the building was burned down, to cover up a \$1,700 theft from the Salvation Army thrift store, next door.

In November 1994, the sisters found the kitchen’s current location, on West Jonathan Drive in Española, through Leroy Salazar of the Center for Housing and Urban Development, when he rented it to them for \$1 a year.

The facility is currently loaned to the sisters rent- and utility-free by the Española Housing Authority.

“We didn’t know what we where doing at first, but people helped us along the way,” Valdez said.

Quintana and Valdez help out occasionally at the soup kitchen, but the youngest sister, Roybal, manages the day-to-day operation.

She has a team of more than 120 volunteers that rotate duties, to keep the kitchen open five days

a week. It serves an average of 50 to 80 patrons each day.

The soup kitchen is open from 11:30 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday.

Roybal said the years have flown by and it is hard to imagine the kitchen has been open for 25 years.

She eventually plans to let her granddaughter Kristen Trujillo, who serves as the San Martin de Porres Soup Kitchen Board secretary and treasurer, take over operation.

Chris Morris, 54 of Chilí, has been volunteering at the soup kitchen for five years and serves as a Board member, as well.



Morris cooks and serves the food about once every month, along with his wife and two sons.

“My children are growing up and I want them to understand the importance of serving your community,” he said.

Española resident Matilda Martinez, 38, said she has been coming to the soup kitchen on and off, with her five children, for the last five years and she is thankful it is there.

“It helps,” she said. “It definitely saves us a meal.”

Valdez said she has seen a lot of the people who use the soup kitchen come full circle and serve as volunteers.

“People sometimes don’t just need a meal, they need companionship,” she said.

The soup kitchen receives a lot of the food it serves through food drives done year-round by various churches in the area.

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