

Parish Kitchen grappling with increased demands on resources

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Editorial Assistant

"For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I assure you that as long as you did this for my brother, you did it for me." (Matt. 25:35, 40)

With the cost of basic needs — food and fuel — rising, people are tightening their belts and purse strings, and donors are cutting back on charitable contributions. No one is noticing this more than agencies which serve the low-income and homeless in urban areas in the diocese.

The Parish Kitchen, located in downtown Covington, is one of those agencies seeing more people affected in this struggling economy, both in increased need and declining donations.

"Right now," said Molly Navin, operations director for the Parish Kitchen, "we have served 2,000 more guests this year, than in 2007 at this time. Considering in July we served 983 more guests than last year, that is really something. August now is running the same — we are going to be way over."

For the over 30 years the Parish Kitchen has served a full, free meal daily to anyone who comes to the door.

The meals cost the Parish Kitchen approximately \$3 per person and consist of a casserole, vegetable, fruit, bread and a homemade dessert and beverage.

The realities of the economy's downturn are hitting what William Jones calls the "working poor." Mr. Jones is executive director of Catholic Charities-Diocese of Covington; Parish Kitchen and Catholic Charities are "sister" agencies.

"We are starting to see new guests, people who are working, but because food and gas costs have gone up so much, their food stamps are running out at the end of the month. These are people who have some means of income and are just not able to see it stretch far enough. When this happens, all those organizations that try to serve low-income people get strained, and that in turn puts a strain on everybody else. This summer we are seeing a growing number of families with children," Mr. Jones said.

Much of the increased demand in recent months has likely been due to families without access to school lunch programs. During the school year, the Parish Kitchen relies on children receiving their meals through the school programs.

Besides a decline in donations, funds that the Parish Kitchen normally receives in the form of an emergency food grant was also down this year by more than \$3,000, Ms. Navin said.

"Besides that food grant, we are supported almost entirely by free will and private donations from churches, organizations, businesses and individuals," all of whom have been very generous over the years.

Without a dedicated staff, over 300 volunteers who work on-site and approximately 200 more volunteers who help by baking desserts, picking up donations, and other contributions, the resources provided to the Parish Kitchen would not be enough to be the hands that graciously feed those in need.

For more information on the Parish Kitchen and information to make a donation, please contact Molly Navin, (859) 581-7745.

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