

Lamorinda Helps Feed the Hungry through Loaves and Fishes

By Jean Follmer



Maureen and Tim McClintick

Photo Jean Follmer

Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa County began feeding the hungry in 1983. It was founded by Pittsburg residents who sought to feed people that were digging through dumpsters in search of food. Loaves and Fishes has since grown to include six serving sites and a catering kitchen. Two of the sites have a certified kitchen. To date, Loaves and Fishes has served over 3,000,000 meals to the hungry. A mid-day meal is served at each of the locations 5 days a week, 52 weeks a year and is available to anyone in need, no questions asked.

Prior to his retirement, Lafayette resident Tim McClintick began volunteering at Loaves and Fishes five years ago. After retiring, he accepted the role of Loaves and Fishes Board Chair and volunteers every third Thursday at St. Michaels and All Angels Church in Concord. A visit to the Concord facility found Mr. McClintick and his fellow volunteers in action. There were seven volunteers, including McClintick's wife, Maureen and three employees working at the facility.

As the largest facility, approximately 250 meals are served there each day. Once everything was ready, there was a "calm before the storm." The patrons were lined up and waiting. Some had arrived by car, others by foot and some with dogs that they tied to trees outside.

At 11:00, the doors opened and in they came. There were men and women of all ages, races and walks of life.

There were even two young children with

their grandparents. Many folks walked right past the food line and went straight to the back of the lunchroom to pick out much needed new clothes and bread that had been donated. With their choices in hand, they returned to the food line and joined the others for lunch.

One fellow has eaten at Loaves and Fishes for 25 years and lives in a local park. The night before, he was stabbed in the thigh and his jacket and shoes were stolen. He had 30-40 staples in his leg and was walking with a limp. When asked how he was feeling, he replied "Yeah, it hurts. I guess I'll get the staples out in a couple weeks." He then walked to the back to pick out a new jacket before returning for his meal. He was well known by the staff, workers and many of the patrons. There was a lot of camaraderie, laughter and hugs of recognition among the patrons and staff. The employees also function as "quasi social workers" according to McClintick, checking in with the folks from day to day to see how they are doing and making program recommendations that could help them out.

McClintick said

about 50% of the patrons are the working poor, 25% are homeless and 25% are seniors. In the summer, there are also a lot of children since they're not in school. The policy of Loaves and Fishes is to serve whoever walks through the door, regardless of their relative need. McClintick said "One of the premises of Loaves and Fishes is to be a non-threatening, low-key place to eat." For some folks, this is their only meal of the day and they are welcome to have as many servings as they want. The facilities tend to get busier toward the end of the month when money starts to run low at home.

Loaves and Fishes has an annual budget of roughly \$1,000,000. \$500,000 of that comes from food donations from grocery stores such as Diablo Foods in Lafayette. The other \$500,000 comes from various donors. Volunteers are also vital to the operations. Currently, there are about 1,200 regular volunteers that serve each month and a number of them are from Lamorinda. Some of the Lamorinda organizations with regular volunteer groups are the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, Temple Isaiah and the Rossmoor Community. There is plenty of room for more volunteers and donations. Further information on becoming a volunteer or making a donation can be obtained at www.loavesandfishesofcontracosta.org.





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