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Front Page

Pastor makes first move to address hunger issues

Hot meal to be served at Elms Elementary School on Nov. 18

BY DAVE BENJAMIN
Staff Writer

JACKSON - Launching a once-a-month hot meal program has become the mission of the pastor and membership of the Hope of Glory Worship Center.

"There is a hunger problem in New Jersey," said the Rev. Christopher D. Solesberry, pastor. "There is a hunger problem in Jackson, [and] we have therefore launched a hot meals program to feed seniors or anyone in need of a hot meal."

Solesberry said Hope of Glory will serve a traditional Thanksgiving meal to people who can use a hot meal on Nov. 18 at 3 p.m. at the Elms Elementary School, Patterson Road.

At the present time, the church holds services at the school on Sunday.

"One of our missions is to basically do a lot of outreach programs to touch the community," he said. "We have hospital ministries going on, and because I do volunteer work at the Jackson Food Pantry, [I realized] there is a hunger problem in Jackson."

By way of illustration, Solesberry said he and his wife were having dinner at a local restaurant when a woman came in looking for food. He said they bought her a meal and found out she has lived in Jackson for more than 11 years.

The pastor said that in another instance he received a phone call from a woman who said she had not eaten in two days. He said he provided the woman with food and a Bible.

In pursuing his idea to provide people in need with a hot meal, Solesberry said he approached Mayor Mark Seda for assistance.

Seda said, "It was brought to my attention that the pastor found a need in Jackson to help feed the hungry. In the short time that I have been involved as mayor, I'm going to do whatever I can, wherever I can, to assist any organization that is willing to provide this type of service."

Solesberry also sought and received support from Jackson Superintendent of Schools Thomas Gialanella.

"We have always believed that our schools belong to the entire Jackson community, not just to the students," Gialanella said. "The entire community supports the school district and we, in turn, are happy to make our facilities available to the community."

Solesberry said people who do not have transportation and would not be able to get to the Elms Elementary School for the hot meal program may call the church office at (732) 833-4807. He said every effort will be made to get people to the school for a hot meal.

"I'm just excited to be able to do this and that all of us are able to come in and link together to be able to do this," he said. "Our vision is reaching out to Jackson."

November 16, 2006

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Solesberry praised Gialanella and thanked the superintendent for his support of the hot meal effort.

"Once he heard and saw the need, he wanted to come on board too," Solesberry said. "I really believe this is a need after seeing the long lines of people picking up food [at the food pantry]. What usually happens is that it picks up, everybody gives a lot of canned goods and things because it's Thanksgiving, so it's in your heart. But after that the inventory of the food pantry drops down because no one remembers that the people still have to eat."

He said he eventually hopes to be able to assess the abilities of the people who are seeking assistance in order to find out what they can do to help them feed themselves.

"Maybe we can help them by locating employment agencies to help them find employment," he said. "Anything we can do to make the citizens of this town build themselves up."

Solesberry said there are people in Jackson who are going unnoticed and those are the people he wants to reach out to with his congregation.