

Carmel Foundation brings meals to seniors, community service members

Carmel: Group brings meals to seniors, community service members

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It's like sitting down to Christmas dinner with the family — a large family.

That's how Kathy Spake, director of volunteers and member services for The Carmel Foundation, sums up the holiday dinner the organization has been putting on for seniors for at least 30 straight Christmas Days.

"It's a little more special," Spake said Friday, as the foundation dining room began to undergo its annual transformation to be ready for the 2 p.m. serving of "ham with all the trimmings" on Christmas Day.

This year, the foundation is serving 96 senior members, bringing another 30 meals to homebound seniors and — like every year — making dinner for Carmel police, fire and ambulance crews working on the holiday.

"They won't get the wine. They'll get the sparkling cider," Spake said.

The 57-year-old foundation, which serves about 4,400 Central Coast seniors and is open to anyone 55 and older for membership, makes Christmas dinner a community endeavor. Rotary Club members serve, Lions Club members ferry meals to the homebound, and foundation president Jill Sheffield delivers dinner piping hot to emergency workers gathered at the firehouse.

"We really appreciate what they do. It's a reflection of what they do year-round for the elderly and retired people," said Carmel Fire Department Capt. Mitch Kastros.

Special touches this year are topiary centerpieces donated by the Carmel by the Sea Garden Club, boxed chocolates from Lula's Chocolates and wine from

the Chateau Julien Wine Estate.

Dinner is by reservation only, and those spots went fast. Spake said reservations were spoken for within five days, and there's a waiting list.

"It's a special event for a lot of long-time members who otherwise would be by themselves," Spake said.

Spake's mother and boyfriend are helping. She says putting on the dinner provides a good sense of the season.

"Just doing something for other people is special," she said. "It's just a fun thing to do."

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