

Hartford Pond Feeds the Homeless

Nine Hartford Pond volunteers had a very humbling night on January 3, 2017 as we served dinner to 90 homeless men at the Immaculate Conception Shelter in Hartford. We are very grateful to Gander Jeff Ellenburg of Esquire Cleaners for catering the meal, as he generously does twelve times a year.



The only things we had to bring for the evening were beverages, so around 6:15 our volunteers started to arrive carrying gallons of milk, soda, and Hawaiian Punch. Our volunteers were Jeff Ellenburg, Cathy Finlayson, Allyson Kataja, Mike Laporte, Dan Rich, Danny Strong, Phoebe Viggiano, and Neal and Joann Waters.



After we all “gloved up”, our first task was to set up the tables for the serving line and get the plates, bowls, salad, rolls/butter, and drink stations ready. Next we took the hot food trays (vegetables, mac and cheese, pulled pork, tortellini) out of the portable oven and set them up on the serving tables.

When we were all set, Mike, the Shift Supervisor at the Shelter, asked the men to stand, thanked us for the dinner, and said grace in Spanish and English.

Cathy, Mike, Joann, Danny, Phoebe and Allyson manned their stations behind the serving tables as the



men lined up and filed through. Armed with big serving spoons, they scooped portions onto the plates. Dan, Neal and Jeff acted as runners, replacing the trays and plates when they ran out, and whisking away the empty trays to the sink for washing.



After everyone had been served, there was a call for seconds and we saw another flurry of activity. We cleared the trays, filled ten “late plates” for folks who wandered in later in the evening, and set up dessert, which was trays of cookies and individual pudding cups with or without whipped cream !

After dinner, Mike thanked us and gave us a tour of the shelter's second floor "No Freeze Beds", an area set aside for accepting additional men who arrived after hours on bone-chilling nights. The shelter turns no one away.



By 8:00 we were all done, but we agreed that the humbling memories will linger with us for quite a while.

The Hartford Pond has worked with the Immaculate Conception for years, donating food, winter clothing, and service hours.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dan Rich, Grand Guardian