

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Weather conditions on Christmas Day in Imperial and surrounding areas weren't conducive to getting outside.

But, despite the winter storm conditions on Friday, the third annual Christmas Day dinner in Imperial still served about 150 people including the 25 helpers, according to coordinator Jody Bopp.

Organizers, however, had planned for more after serving about 225 last year.

"The weather just killed us," Bopp said this week.

However, he felt the CodeRED announcement issued by the county Friday morning that the dinner was still on did help bring more people in who might not have attended without the notice.

Road conditions were icy in much of the area, but some people still came from south of Champion and as far as Lamar, Bopp said. Most of the crowd was there at 11 a.m. with another rush coming about noon.

The meal was served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For the meal's main dishes, volunteers beforehand prepared two 19 lb. hams, 11 turkeys and tamales. Leftovers Friday were sent home with the volunteer workers, or were given to the hospital and Manor, Bopp said.

Food was contributed by local churches and the Eagles Auxiliary. The Eagles Club donated use of their facilities and equipment.

The dinner has become an annual event sponsored by the Ministerial Association of Southwest Nebraska. There was no charge for the meal, but the Association collected about \$585 in free will donations at the dinner.

Pastor Todd Burpo said the donations will be used to supplement the indigent care fund, which helps needy travelers coming through the community with food, gas and lodging costs.

The Ministerial Association took over that indigent care service from the food pantry more than a year ago. Burpo noted that vouchers are given to needy individuals for food, gas and lodging, and are dispersed at the sheriff's office after a background check is done on the individual.