



By Sheri Hink-Wagner
The Wauneta Breeze

Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska has come a long way since they first opened their doors in September 2012. Since that time volunteers at the organization have packaged nearly 300,000 meals.

“We’ve been amazed at the reception we’ve received from people all over southwest Nebraska,” said board member Harold Nordhausen.

So far, the group has held more than 36 packing events. Volunteers have come from all over the area—Wauneta, Imperial, McCook, Hamlet, Hayes Center, Trenton and beyond.

After Monday’s packing the total count of meals packaged was up to 298,800.

More packing sessions are planned for this weekend and early next week.

Nordhausen indicated the meals packed at the recent packings in remembrance of Amanda Johnson and those packed this week and next week will be sent via the Orphan Grain Train to the Philippians and South Vietnam.

The shipment of at least 10 pallets (approximately 72,000 meals) is expected to go out in early December.

Donations needed to purchase supplies

Board members say these next few packings may use up the majority of the organization’s meal packing supplies.

“So many people have stepped forward to pack. We need packers and we also need people to step forward with financial support to buy more supplies,” explained Mercy Meals Treasurer Mary Haarberg of Imperial.

Each bag packed at Mercy Meals contains six servings, or meals. The total cost of each meal is just 12 cents.

Each meal includes a mixture of rice, soy, chicken flavoring and dried vegetables. Each set of six meals is put in a bag and labeled with an expiration date.

“Our supplies are getting to be the lowest they’ve been since we started,” explained Nordhausen.

The organization has spent nearly \$18,000 on food products to be packaged into meals since September this year.

Purchase of all products for the meals and packing materials is done with donations. The majority of all donations to Mercy Meals goes to purchase product for hungry children and families across the world.

Due to the low cost of the supplies needed to package meals, leaders have indicated donations of every level can make a big difference. For instance, a gift of \$12 will provide for 100 meals and a gift of \$432 will provide for 3,600 meals.

A shipment of new product to be packed into meals costs between \$8,000 and \$9,000. So far, Orphan Grain Train has covered all shipment expenses, though board members indicated

Orphan Grain Train may not be able to do so indefinitely.

Board members said the work of Mercy Meals will continue, but may have to be put on hold until more product can be purchased.

"We'll do whatever we can with the funds we have," expressed Nordhausen.

How to help

Those who would like to donate to the organization can do so by sending checks payable to Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska to P.O. Box 474, Wauneta, NE 69045.

More information and a volunteer sign up form is available at the website: mercymealsoftsouthwestnebraska.org.