



Total of 187,200 meals packaged by more than 400 volunteers at event

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

The Zion Lutheran Church in Imperial was a flurry of activity over the weekend when more than 400 volunteers gathered to package meals for starving people in the Philippines.

Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska hosted the mega packing event, a collaborative project with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and Orphan Grain train, with a goal of packaging 160,000 meals.

At the end of the weekend, they surpassed their goal by packaging a total of 187,200 meals. "It was awesome! The event was very well organized and ran smoothly. The volunteers were very willing to help wherever needed, were excited and had a good time helping with this mission project. Some of them said it was nice to get to do 'hands on,'" said Mercy Meals board member Mary Haarberg of Imperial.

"We had people of all ages. The kids were very inquisitive and eager to find out where the meals were going and asked many questions about the ingredients and the kids from the Philippines who were receiving it. It gave the kids a sense of pride and accomplishment," she added.

The meals—which consist of rice, soy, dehydrated vegetables, chicken flavored vitamin and mineral powder—are designed to be gentle on the digestive system of individuals who may be malnourished or starving.

The meals packaged at the event are being sent directly to the Philippines for starving children and families impacted by the typhoon that hit the Philippines on Nov. 8, 2013.

According to the LCMS website, "The storm displaced four million people, killed nearly 6,000 and destroyed everything in its path. Emergency food provisions and rebuilding homes and churches on the island of Leyte are part of the ongoing relief efforts by the LCMS and the Lutheran Church in the Philippines."

Volunteers traveled to Imperial from as far north as Ogallala, as far west as Sterling, Colo., as far east as McCook and as far south as Bird City, Kan. In fact, once they were there several volunteers stayed past their designated shift and worked another.

Volunteers were also accommodating after the snow storm that hit Saturday afternoon and evening.

Some rescheduled their shift to the Mercy Meals house in Wauneta on a later date and others who were able to make it to the church on Sunday stayed to help cover the second shift for others who were unable to make it in.

