

The giving spirit of Georgetown

Georgetown is noted for its “Most Beautiful Town Square,” but what about its giving spirit? Holiday Meals Delivered, formally the Georgetown Christmas Day Program, has been a “giving” community activity for about 25 years.

In 2022, as in the past, some members from Women Helping Others assisted with the program. WHO initiated toiletries drives, promoted cookie baking and packaging drives, donated gift cards and provided drivers for Christmas morning deliveries.

About the program: The late Joann Ford — Ford Elementary School was named in her honor — started what is known today as Holiday Meals Delivered in 1997 to give seniors in need a hot Christmas dinner, a small gift and other donated items. She solicited the services of many Georgetown volunteers.

In these early years, meals were cooked in various church kitchens. Rusty and Lael Winkstein from The Monument Café were volunteers in these kitchens. In 1999, the Winksteins started the Community Christmas Dinners, where their three daughters, friends and café team members volunteered their time to cook and serve a no cost meal to anyone who showed up to the café on Christmas Day. It was their way to

make sure their girls experienced the joy and honor in serving others. They may have moaned and groaned a little at getting up early to work at the café, but after the first year it was solidly part of their family Christmas tradition.

In 2005, Beth Jenkins asked them to prepare the meals for the HMD program. This continued until Christmas of 2019.

Ms. Jenkins, president of Pilot's Choice Aviation, Inc., and her dad started as drivers for this program in 2000. In 2005, she took over the responsibility to contin-



Holiday Meals Delivered organizer Beth Jenkins stands with the Sheraton in Georgetown's chef Robert Felios.

ue this program. Under her leadership, it has grown from 50 or so senior families to serving over 260 families.

As this program has grown, the philosophy has not changed. Joann Ford saw a need, carried it out and today many families benefit from this simple act of caring and giving.

In 2022, a record 435 families were served, with 1,500 hot meals prepared. About 500 children, their parents and 131 seniors received gifts. About 300 gallon bags of toiletries, 500 dozen cookies and other items were donated. And 450 volunteers participat-

ed.

In 2020, the Sheraton in Georgetown took over the task of preparing the meals. Chef Robert Felios has a long history of loving food. This love for food took him along a journey for the last 27 years that he never thought possible to different cities and states to hotel chains and different cuisine. One of the things he most loves about food is you will never know it all; just when you think you have it down something new comes out.

His mother, Geri Felios, has always worked in nonprofit organi-

zations. She has such a big heart for those in need and it rubbed off on him. When presented with the opportunity for Sheraton to cook and help those in need he couldn't turn it down. He knows the need is high during the holidays for those that are less fortunate. And what better way than to reach out and lift people up with the love of food? This will be the third year that Sheraton has prepared the meals for Holiday Meals Delivered, and he hopes that this opportunity continues for many years down the road.

Thank you to Georgetown volunteers, people like Beth Jenkins who help keep the program going, and businesses and organizations who donate time, money, items and kindness to Holiday Meals Delivered like Monument Café, Blue Santa, Meals on Wheels, Georgetown ISD, The Caring Place, Sheraton in Georgetown, H-E-B, IKEA, The Round Rock Service Center, Fredrickson Ranch in Georgetown and so many others.

We may not have it all together, but together we have it all! Thank you Georgetown.

Anne Marshall is a member of Woman Helping Others, a Sun City and Georgetown-based club that works to help area nonprofit organizations.

WOMEN HELPING OTHERS

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