

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2009

Mission Tuesday #19



Yesterday at Mission of Hope was probably the busiest day I've experienced there so far! As Zach and I were arriving around 9:30 (Ali had volleyball camp at school), so were boxes of frozen foods, non-perishable food items for the Food Pantry, and 800 pounds of frozen meat! Large totes of bread and pastries had also just arrived from a local grocery store!

I grabbed a cup of coffee and Zach and I got to work! We began in the kitchen, filling the pastry trays which were just set out a half-hour before and were already close to empty. We refilled the coffee pot and began to organize the cooler to make space for the pastries and other food coming in.

After that was done, we worked our way to the Food Pantry and put the bread and rolls that had just arrived on the bread shelves. It was wonderful to see so many different kinds of bread for the Mission patrons! As I continued to work on that, Zach helped a couple people walk through the Pantry to receive bags of food. Zach noticed a few cans on the meat shelf were upside down or the labels weren't facing forward...of course he fixed them and aligned them perfectly. :-)) I had to chuckle to myself...Could he take after his Mom?

The Mission staff and volunteers were on the schedule to make lunch. It was planned that since Pizza Hut brings in pre-baked frozen Personal Pan Pizzas on Tuesdays, we would bake and serve those pizzas for lunch! Also on the menu were two kinds of fruit salad--a tropical fruit salad and a pistachio fruit salad, and three kinds of desserts--Coldstone ice cream in individual containers, apple tarts and cherry pies.

Once the pizzas arrived, around 10:30, I began the process of heating the pizzas. I could not believe all the pizzas there were...I'm guessing there were over 150! Julie, a volunteer from a local college, and Glen helped, and thank the Lord they did! Our dilemma was with only one oven, and being able to heat only about 15 pizzas at a time, how would we keep the baked pizzas hot until lunchtime? Will brought up from the basement storage room chafing pans with burners, and food containers that caterers use to keep food hot. We also used two roasters to try to help. We knew we would need as many containers, roasters, etc. as possible to hold 150 pizzas! Roy, another volunteer, took some of the pizzas and one of the catering containers over to the Mission of Hope Shelter to heat in the oven there. That helped a lot too!

If you can picture this, three of us, plus Zach and Olivia helped for a short time,



we were putting the pizzas in their tin pans on the oven racks, heating them for about eight minutes, taking them out and handing them to someone else to put in the containers, separating the layers of pizza with sheets of aluminum foil, and doing the cycle again and again! At one point I almost laughed out loud when I thought of myself as an Italian pizza maker! :-) I'm sure it was quite the sight...but we had a great system working! Steve G. had a good comment...he said, "Julie, just think, by cooking for this many, when you cook at home, it'll seem like a piece of cake!" I agreed with him! :-)

We began serving the meal about 12:05, and it was so nice that everyone was very understanding and patiently waiting. Five minutes makes a big difference! I SO was pleased the pizza stayed hot! Everyone seemed to enjoy the lunch, and many came back for seconds. I kept baking the pizzas as others served the food. Once the line died down, I grabbed a cheese pizza for myself...and I couldn't pass up a Coldstone ice cream! It was awesome but I could only eat about 1/2 of it...Chocolate Devotion was the flavor! How wonderful it was for Coldstone Creamery to donate the ice cream and for Pizza Hut to

donate the pizzas! I also believe the salads and other desserts were donated as well! Those that donated really blessed lots of people at the Mission yesterday...including me! We ended up serving around 115 people.

While we were cleaning up the kitchen I chatted with one of the men who helps the Mission a lot. He's been having hip problems and shared how he's working through physical therapy. He does so much for everyone there! I also had a very short conversation with a man who came in after lunch was almost finished. His clothes were dirty and he looked worn out. He asked me if there was any food left...he said he was starving! We had two pizzas left...I handed him one on a plate, put both kinds of salad on his plate and gave him a cherry pie. He was so pleased and said over and over, "God bless you. God bless you." I said the same back to him, and I meant it with all I had. He devoured his food and came back for seconds. I thanked God under my breath that very moment for Mission of Hope...that this very hungry man could find a nice hot meal here and a place to rest his weary body.

Before I knew it, we had to leave to pick up Ali from volleyball camp. Before leaving though, I told Julie and Glen who helped me in the kitchen that we NEVER could have pulled off the meal without their help. I was so thankful for them! The volunteers are what keep Mission of Hope running "on all cylinders!" I left feeling totally exhausted and wondering where in the world the day went...time went so fast! It was a good exhausted though...knowing even though I was the "pizza baker," I made a difference in people's lives yesterday. That's always a good feeling! :-)

Again, thank you God for Mission of Hope! I ask for your continued blessing on the Mission, its staff, volunteers and on the people we serve there!