

## Churches join forces to serve up monthly meal ministry

Written by MARK JAEGER

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A monthly community meal has been feeding hungry families since March, and building rapport among a host of area churches.

The meal ministry is operated in conjunction with the Saukville Community Food Pantry.

Free lunches are served from noon to 1 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of each month, at St. Peter's United Church of Christ, 166 W. Dekora St.

The menus have included popular comfort foods like spaghetti, soup and sandwiches, and turkey and mashed potatoes. The meals are topped off by homemade desserts and coffee provided by the Java Dock in Port Washington.

Mark Gierach, executive director of the Food Pantry, said the meals have been drawing about 30 people each month.

Churches from Saukville, Port Washington and Grafton have sponsored the meals. About a dozen volunteers are needed to prepare and serve the food.

"The community has been very responsive," Gierach said. "The meals have attracted a wide range of people, including the elderly, young single-parent families and even the homeless."

A poster for the Community Meals Ministry. The background is a warm, golden-brown color with a silhouette of a church steeple and a dome. The text is arranged as follows: 'COMMUNITY MEALS' in large, bold, yellow-outlined letters at the top; 'Ministry' in a large, black, cursive font below it; 'Free Meal Every' in a smaller black font; '4th Saturday' in a large, bold, black font; 'Noon - 1pm' in a large, bold, black font; 'Saukville Community Food Pantry at 166 W. Dekora St.' in a white font at the bottom left; and a list of dates on the right: 'July 27', 'August 24', 'September 28', 'October 26', 'November 23', 'Thanksgiving Day', and 'December 28'.

The meals are open to any Ozaukee County resident, and no proof of income is required.

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Upcoming community meals will be held on Saturdays, July 27, Aug. 24, Sept. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 23 and Dec. 28.

Gierach said the popularity of the community meal program underlines the needs of people living in the community, a point that Food Pantry volunteers are reminded of on a regular basis.

“People are very good about donating food around the holidays, but the need continues throughout the year. There is actually a far greater need during the summer, when children aren’t getting free or reduced-cost meals at school,” he said.

Gierach said support for the pantry continues to grow since it was started two years ago.

“Awareness for something like this builds slowly, especially after we decided what money we take in should be spent on food and not publicity,” he said.

So far this year, Gierach said the pantry has served more than 160 local families.