

Remarks of LeRoy Chatfield

Loaves & Fishes Celebration of 7th Million Meal Served

During my 13 years as Executive Director I cannot tell you how many times I heard some version of the following: “LeRoy, I was in real bad shape, without Loaves I would be dead by now!” Or “I was so weak waiting for the Dining Room to open, I had to hold on to the fence to keep from falling down”. “LeRoy, thank you, Fish & Loaves saved my life!

“Saved my life!” Loaves & Fishes saved my life! What does this mean? How did Loaves & Fishes save the lives of these guests who came to me to say “thank you!”

The answer is FOOD. These guests were thanking me for the home-cooked, full course noon meal served in the Loaves & Fishes Dining Room 364 days a year.

Consider this. These Dining Room guests of ours – homeless men, women and and yes! even children – are so impoverished, so destitute, and so hungry, they have to come to Loaves every day for the food they eat. They have nothing, only their daily hunger. They depend upon Loaves to serve this daily meal so they can survive.

Truly – and literally speaking - the noon daily meal at Loaves & Fishes is their life-saver!

To provide this meal – the only meal of the day for more than 750 men women and children in the Sacramento area – Loaves & Fishes spends \$800,000 a year - \$67,000 a month; \$2,200 a day.

This money is privately donated in the form of voluntary individual contributions or grants from private sector charitable organizations. Loaves & Fishes neither solicits nor accepts government funding.

This annual cost of \$800,000 does NOT include the in-kind contribution of the 20-25 volunteers who come each day to prepare, cook, and serve the noon meal. Over

the course of the month, more than 600 volunteers create and serve this meal in the Loaves & Fishes Dining Room and have been doing so since meal number # 1 - a number that has now grown to more than 7 million meals served.

This number is an incredible example of what organized volunteers can accomplish on behalf of the homeless and hungry members of our community. These volunteers come from every religious – or non-religious – community group you can imagine; they come together because they are motivated by only one goal: that is, to feed the hungry in our community.

I daresay the Loaves & Fishes Dining Room is the largest volunteer effort for feeding the hungry in the State of California. What a blessing for our Sacramento-area community!

Let me ask you! How many people in Sacramento do you know who wake up in the morning and when asked what they are going to do that day can honestly answer: I am going to save a person's life! I am going to feed a homeless and hungry person their only meal of the day!

You ask! How long can Loaves & Fishes continue feeding the hungry? Will there someday be an 8th Million Meal served?

The answer to that question rests with you here tonight and with those future volunteers who will be motivated to prepare, cook and the serve the noon meal.

But ultimately, I believe the final answer rests with those living in the Sacramento area who wish to save the lives of the homeless and hungry members of our community.

And for my part, let me say “thank you!” Loaves & Fishes saved my life!

