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Briefing for Zephyrhills City Council
Elk's Lodge # 2371
Feed the Kids program

Three years ago the Exalted Ruler of Elk's Lodge, 2731, Zephyrhills, Donna Moyer, met with Dianna Thomas and Amanda Keith of Thomas Promise as Thomas Promise had no way to get food to the children during the summer months.

Donna stated the Elk's have a kitchen, volunteers, a large dining area, charity funds and could possibly help.

This program was presented to the Elk's Board and to the general membership for approval and received that approval with a unanimous vote.

The first year the Elk's used prepackaged meals provided by the school system under a federal program and meals were delivered daily during the week days for the children only. Parents or caregivers were not fed with the schools program so the Elk's offered sandwiches for the adults. Thomas Promise made intermittent deliveries of groceries as well as their weekend bags for the kids.

The second summer was started with the schools program. That program offered less than nutritious food, in the Elk's opinion, such as a cheese stick, muffin and a box of raisins. As the Elk's would allow 2 school servings to a student due to the size of that meal the numbers did not fall into line and they were "not following the rules". The Elk's decided that those rules were not adequate for our children so dropped the school program and struck out with it's own program and began cooking home style meals for the kids and the parents and caregivers. Devising kid friendly menus the Elk's volunteers pitched in cooking different meals daily using a two week menu cycle. The end of the second summer Elk's had fed 1,245 meals.

Thomas Promise continued with their weekend bags and the Elk's expanded their program, collecting back packs with school supplies for all the kids. A local hair stylist, Jay Martello at Hair Designs by Jay, gave out vouchers for a free back to school hair cut and Meals on Wheels frequently donated food for Elk's to cook and for the parents to take home.

This is the third summer for the Elk's program, cooking nutritious hot meals, providing sandwiches as alternates, fresh veggies, milk and desserts to the kids and adults. Thomas Promise and Meals on Wheels continue to deliver groceries and food to the Elk's kitchen. Parents can take home groceries to feed their families and the kids continue to get weekly bags of weekend food.

To expand this program again, this year the Elk's have begun collecting books so the

kids can take home their own book to read, which they seem to enjoy.

Also new this year is a partnership with Westbrook Assisted Living Center. Their activities director comes weekly to do crafts with the kids and their management team has volunteered to do the cooking once a month for the kids.

In the planning stages to continue to upgrade this program, the Elk's Lodge may hold a summer end party for the kids to include bounce houses, water games, etc. co-hosted by Thomas Promise.

One gratifying issue here is that this community has pitched in to help. Not only are the Lodge's members volunteering but community adults who have heard of the program, are not Elk members, are volunteering to assist, to come in, help set up tables, cook, clean up and whatever is needed. Some on a daily basis.

As of this date this year Elk's has fed 1560 meals, translating to 50-100 kids and parents daily and this is only the beginning of the sixth week of the summer.

This entire program is funded with donations by lodge members, local people and most recently a large donation from the Zephyrhills Women's Club.

The Elk's is issuing to you, the City Council, a challenge to come out during your lunch hours and see what it is doing for your community. We will even let you serve if you wish.

Meals are served the kids Monday through Friday from 11 AM till 1 PM. We would love to have you visit. May even feed you!

Thank you for listening.



W. Cliff McDuffie, Trustee