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Law firm volunteers bake desserts for weekly church dinners

by **Charlotte Ferrell Smith**
Daily Mail staff

Within the last two years, volunteer bakers who work at the law firm Spilman Thomas & Battle have provided 10,000 desserts for Trinity's Table, a Sunday dinner ministry at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The 20 co-workers are now gearing up for the pre-Thanksgiving feast at Trinity, where hundreds are expected to be served from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Sunday. They are baking dozens of pies, including pumpkin, sweet potato and assorted fruit.

Since 2010, free Sunday suppers have been offered at the church to anyone who wishes to eat there, no questions asked.

Married attorneys Lee Feinberg and Susan Riggs are partners at Spilman and members at Trinity, where they became involved in helping with the dinners.

The dessert service offered by employees at the firm began with one email.

"Lee was talking with folks in the office about what he and his wife do to participate in Trinity's Table," said Karrie Mattox, a paralegal at the firm. "He was talking about the meals and the number of people served."

Mattox realized that as meal organizers concentrated on providing proteins and vegetables, they found it difficult to include desserts.

She sent out an email to co-workers and within minutes enough people were on board to provide numerous desserts the last Friday of each month to be delivered to the church for the following Sunday.

It began with a group of 18 and has since expanded to 20. Participants may bake or buy desserts or donate cash to pick up more.

"We've been doing it every month for two years," Mattox said. "We deliver the last Sunday of the month. The overage is frozen so they can extend the weeks (desserts are available). We've calculated to date we've done over 10,000 desserts."

In addition to providing such goodies, on special occasions, such as holidays, the group puts together bags with treats and crafts for kids to take home. For Memorial Day and Labor Day they provided all the fixings for an ice cream bar as well as watermelon.

"We come up with new ideas all the time," Mattox said. "For Thanksgiving and Christmas we will have take-home crafts in individual baggies."

For the pre-Thanksgiving feast, some people from the law firm will help serve.

Amy King Condaras, a partner in the firm, is grateful that so many of her co-workers are so giving.

"It's amazing what people will do when given the opportunity," she said. "Spilman is humbled by

the passion of its people and their willingness to give of their time and money to be a small part of such a greater cause and put a smile on the face of those who are served by Trinity's Table."

Those involved in the dessert project get emotional when talking about it. They recall the faces of those who enjoy the sweets. Treats that many of us take for granted are not readily available to many, they point out. They are also more aware of those in the community who are hungry.

Jane Adkins, a secretary at the law firm, was helping serve at Trinity's Table one Sunday when she offered an elderly gentleman an extra meal to take home.

"He couldn't take it because he had to ride the bus and then walk four miles to his house," she said. "It was the first meal he had had in two days."

Stephanie Queen, who works in accounts payable at the firm, said she has become more aware that her family has so much.

"We throw away food and have a freezer in the garage," she said. "Not everyone has all those choices."

Felicia Marshall, a paralegal, recalls helping with a meal at the church when one man talked about how happy he was to have butter.

The co-workers go the extra mile to make their desserts special whether they bake or buy them. Litigation clerk Sandra Miller recently prepared 145 cake balls. She and her sister do a lot of baking and decorating at their church. They had just completed a volunteer project for their church when the opportunity arose to bake goodies for Trinity's Table.

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