

Serving a comforting meal at Munson Manor

BY JANET HIBBARD

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How do you know how much food you'll need to feed 20 to 30 people?

That was the original question when a group of us prepared a meal for the Munson Manor Hospitality House. The solution was to guess at the number of guests and hope we had enough.

Munson Manor is available to persons who have loved ones in Munson or are receiving daily outpatient treatments and live at least 35 miles out of town. According to Connie Nelson, resident manager of Munson Manor,

the cost per room ranges from \$25 to \$55 a night, depending on the number of persons in each room. They are normally 75 percent full.

Munson Manor opened Nov. 15, 2000, mostly with Munson Hospital working with a local attorney, George Thompson. It is housed in a renovated building close to the hospital, and has served more than 50,000 people to date.

There are 30 rooms which can accommodate up to 54 persons. Each room has a private bathroom and there are children's playrooms and three TV lounges, one with a pool table. There is a complete laundry in the basement

which is free to the guests.

There are four kitchens each with a refrigerator, stove, microwave and dishwasher. Residents are allowed to use the kitchens and bring in food that may be stored in the cupboards or refrigerator. Dishes, cookware and silverware are available. Groups can volunteer to make dinners for the residents.

At present the Presbyterian Church and the Rotary Club are among those preparing dinners once a week. There is no charge for the meals and the menus are posted in advance. Complimentary meals are offered three to four times a month.

Our group signed up at church and was contacted a few days before as a reminder. We arrived at Munson Manor about 4:30 p.m. With much of the preparation done at home, we set the tables and heated up ravioli and garlic bread. Tossed salad and dessert rounded out the meal. We had everything ready by 6 p.m. when the residents began coming back from the hospital. Many peeked into the kitchen to see what was going on. The aroma of a home cooked meal filled the hallways and soon the residents were lined up to fill their plates and get settled at a table in the dining room.

Conversation was rather subdued, as it was obvious that

the residents had more serious matters on their minds. Eating dinner had not been a top priority. Visiting with others who found themselves in similar circumstances seemed to help. From the many heartfelt thanks we received, the dinner appeared to be a success for everyone involved.

Many times we ask friends and loved ones if there is anything we can do in times of emergency. Well, there are things anyone could do — like donating cash or food staples to Munson Manor. The program is well-established, with a competent staff and beautifully furnished building, but they can always use a helping hand. This is a unique opportunity for the community to show Traverse City hospitality to those people who suddenly find themselves in unpredictable and upsetting circumstances.

Having a home base where the people are friendly and caring can mean everything when your whole life has been turned upside down and your world revolves around a hospital room. Meeting the needs of people who are in such stressful situations can become as simple as fixing a hot meal.

Janet Hibbard is a local freelance writer.

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