

Lyons residents: "This is our family"

A Thanksgiving this river town will never forget

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Esther Snyder gets a plate of food during the Thanksgiving meal served Thursday at Rogers Hall in Lyons. Snyder and her sister Ruth Douglas were evacuated by helicopter from their home on Longmont Dam Road during the flood. (Lewis Geyer/Times-Call)

LYONS -- Two months ago, sisters Esther Snyder and Ruth Douglas had to leave their home by helicopter, a step ahead of the floods.

"We had just one hour to pull stuff together, get one bag, take off and get out of there," Snyder recalled.

On Thursday, the sisters and several others who lived in or near Lyons had a chance for something a bit less hurried. Several area churches sponsored a community Thanksgiving dinner at Rogers Hall for the town, which is still rebuilding from the September disaster.

"This is a community that lost a lot this year," said volunteer Brandon Fossey. "If we can help in any little way -- I can't imagine what some of these families have to have gone through."



Lyons residents Mike Porter and his wife, Amy Natho, finish their Thanksgiving meal Thursday at Rogers Hall in Lyons.

(Lewis Geyer/Times-Call)

No one had to imagine. Snippets of conversation throughout the dining hall filled in details - mold that had to be removed from one home, heat that had yet to be turned on at another, water that was being boiled at a third.

At one point, said the Rev. Mickey Lohr of The River, his Lyons church had 80 families in need of assistance. (The number is down now to about 15.) That's when he and the Rev. Darrel Wilmoth of Front Range Calvary Church in Thornton began talking about doing something special for the town's residents, who would be celebrating their first Thanksgiving since the flood.

Wilmoth took the lead but, he said, the pieces fell into place so neatly that "all I had to do was hold the clipboard." One email offered 100 cooked turkeys -- Wilmoth took 17, as much as the event could handle. Another family wrote to say they were making brownies. Students from Alexander Dawson School in Lafayette handled the decorations and five or six churches joined forces to put the whole thing together, including the Harvest Christian Fellowship from Riverside, Calif., which frequently sends teams of volunteers to disaster areas.



LaVern Johnson arrives at the Thanksgiving lunch served Thursday at Rogers Hall in Lyons. (Lewis Geyer/Times-Call)

"We came to help them emotionally, we came to help them physically, to cry with them, to laugh with them," said Joe Centeno of the nine-person Harvest team. "We want them to look forward and know God's got the answer. Sometimes it isn't today or tomorrow, but it's there."

For the sisters, who live on Longmont Dam Road near town, it couldn't have been better.

"It's overwhelming," Snyder said. "Everyone is so gracious and so giving. Just welcoming."

Brothers Tom and Jerry Cox, whose Lyons home was spared by the flood, had a simpler way of putting it.

"This is our family," Tom Cox said, indicating the entire room and the entire town. "This is our family."