

Senior Meals Program Feeds the Spirit

December, 2009, Modesto, CA - It's early morning and kitchen crew at HTC's Arc Catering prepare and package meals; load them into the appropriate van for transportation staff to deliver to the thirteen congregate senior meals sites administered by Howard Training Center. Meanwhile, site managers at senior meal locations are setting the scene for more than a warm meal.

"We have activities that bring seniors together," states HTC Senior Meals Coordinator Misty Ridenour. "It gives them a chance to get out and about, meet other seniors, to socialize and have a nutritious meal." In fact some sites have become beacons of social activity to the seniors in their communities.

Turlock Senior Meals Site Manager Nancy Ramos brings a scrapbook to share with her seniors, showing the good times they've shared. Nancy decorates her site with dollar store items, dons themed costumes, plays music, and organizes dancing. She has a base of loyal CSU Stanislaus student volunteers to lend a helping hand and keep the spirit glowing at her site.

"Only 10 to 20 people were coming to the site in mid 2007. With Nancy's special brand of enthusiasm and shared activity, we are serving between 30 and 40 seniors regularly," adds Ridenour. Patterson site serves up to 70 meals some days. Hughson senior meal site hosts a Bingo game that draws a loyal following on Fridays. Recently established Riverbank site has activity in the works and supportive volunteers. Young At Heart senior aerobics sessions occur at Waterford and Oakdale sites. Board games, dominos, bingo, are a sampling of the offerings site managers may serve to fuel the spirits of their diners.