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Heartland Lutheran offers low-cost food through Angel Food Ministries

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Lloyd Wagnitz believes Heartland Lutheran High School can do well by doing good.

Wagnitz hopes the vehicle for accomplishing both goals is Angel Food Ministries, which was established in 1994. The company is based in Monroe, Ga. He said Angel Food Ministries has a goal of getting "food out to people at a reasonable cost."

Wagnitz said that should be an attractive proposition during these economic times.

Angel Food is assisted in its goal, he said, by schools and churches that become host sites for the organization. Heartland Lutheran High School was named as a host site this past week.

Wagnitz said that host sites are able to earn \$1 for each box of food they sell.

Wagnitz, who is foundation director for Heartland Lutheran High School, said Gene Dominick of Grand Island approached him last year with the idea of the school becoming a host site.

Wagnitz agreed to operate the Angel Food program on a trial basis, starting this past December. He said the results have been good so far.

Heartland Lutheran sold 23 boxes in December, 17 boxes in January, 62 boxes in February and as of this past Wednesday, 59 boxes in March.

"We'll go over 62 boxes for March," said Wagnitz, who said the deadline for March orders was to be noon Friday.

That prediction proved to be on the mark, with Wagnitz giving The Independent a Friday afternoon update that 142 boxes had been sold by the noon deadline.

Those totals would have netted Heartland Lutheran \$241 if it had been a host site, Wagnitz said. But the foundation director said he has far higher goals for Heartland Lutheran.

Wagnitz said he wants the school to sell a minimum of 400 to 600 boxes per month, which would create a monthly revenue stream of \$400 to \$600.

He said he is confident Heartland Lutheran can meet that minimum goal because many food sales have come through simple word of mouth, rather than through a highly organized campaign.

He said he has been surprised by some of the calls he has received from individuals, organizations or churches to request food.

Wagnitz said people do not have to subscribe to be part of the program. They can simply order food any month they want or they can decide to forgo ordering food any month they want.

People who order food must buy either a regular box, a senior/convenience box or an allergen-free box of food.

Wagnitz said the senior/convenience box comes in the form of 10 “TV dinners.”

Among the March menu choices for the senior/convenience box are a BBQ pork rib patty with sweet potato casserole and green peas or red beans and rice with smoked sausage, cabbage and diced carrots. The March menu includes eight other dinners, plus 10 two-packs of individually wrapped cookies. Total cost is \$28.

The March allergen-free box has one pound each of coated chicken tenders, coated breast filets, coated chicken nuggets, coated chicken wings, and coated cube (chicken fried) steak. Its cost is \$25.

The staple, though, is the regular box. For March, it includes 1.5 pounds of ribeye steaks, 3 pounds of split chicken breasts, 1.5 pounds of country fried steaks, 1 pound of ground beef, 1 pound of fully cooked meatballs, 1 pound of mild Italian sausage and 12 ounces of deli sliced hams.

Also in the March regular box are 1 pound of California-blend vegetables, 1 pound of green beans, 20 ounces of shoestring fries, 1 pound of pasta, 28 ounces of marinara sauce, 21 ounces of condensed soup for five servings, 1 pound of pinto beans, 32 ounces of 2-percent milk, a dozen eggs and dessert.

The total price for that box is \$30. Angel Food Ministries said that the regular box provides enough food to feed a family of four for one week.

Angel Food Ministries says the regular box is a \$65 to \$75 value.

Wagnitz said he cannot independently verify that claim because he does not do the regular grocery shopping for his family. But he said his wife has assured him that seems to be a reliable statement.

Once people have ordered either a regular box, a senior/convenience box or an allergen-free box, they are then eligible to buy one or more of six special boxes for the month.

For March, the specials are a 7-pound assorted meat box, a 4.5-pound meat combo, a “Mom’s Easter Sunday Dinner Box,” a “Mom’s Easter Sunday Dinner Side Box,” a 10-pound chicken tenders box and finally, a fresh fruit and veggie box.

Prices go from a low of \$18 for the chicken tenders to a high of \$22 each for the 7-pound meat box, the Easter Sunday Dinner Box and the fresh fruit and veggie box.

Wagnitz said the menu will change each month.

To participate, people must send or bring an order, complete with payment, to Heartland Lutheran High School, 3900 W. Husker Highway.

Wagnitz said the monthly deadline for ordering is by noon on the second Friday of each month. Two Saturdays later will be distribution day, with the pickup location at Heartland Lutheran High School.

For this month, that meant a deadline of noon on March 13, with distribution at Heartland Lutheran High School to be on March 28. People will be called for the distribution time.

Wagnitz said it is called distribution because the regular box does not come all packed. Instead, people who have purchased a regular box should arrive with a box of their own. An “assembly line” of volunteers will then pack that box as the person moves along.

The senior/convenience box and allergen-free box, in contrast, are all pre-packed.

Lloyd Wagnitz is hoping that the 12 churches that make up the association for Heartland Lutheran High School will help market Angel Food products.

So far, Trinity Lutheran School, Trinity Lutheran Church, Peace Lutheran Church, Grace Lutheran Church and Worms Lutheran Church are all active as “marketing arms” for Heartland Lutheran’s Angel Food program, Wagnitz said.

Only Heartland Lutheran High School receives the dollar for each box of food that is sold, Wagnitz said. But it especially makes sense for the churches to help Heartland Lutheran High School find a new revenue stream because they are already financially supporting the high school.

Wagnitz has only had time to ask Trinity Lutheran School, Trinity Lutheran Church, Peace Lutheran Church and Grace Lutheran Church to act as “marketing arms,” but he plans to eventually ask all the remaining association churches to help market the program.

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