

The biggest Christmas dinner 'An amazing display of community generosity'

By CAROLYN LEAL
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WHEN THE ANNUAL Grey Bears' Christmas dinner goes on the table Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, it will be the result of a massive community effort.

The McCrary family of Big Creek Lumber Co. will make 100 apple pies, their annual contribution. Santa Cruz Fire Fighters Association will provide transportation for seniors from convalescent homes.

Perhaps the biggest job of all will be handled by Thelma Dalman, director of food services for Santa Cruz schools. She and a crew of volunteers will be roasting 2500 pounds of turkey. Plus cooking up a ton of mashed potatoes, dressing, gravy and mixed vegetables. Salad, cranberry sauce, rolls, home baked pies, apple juice, wine and coffee will complete the menu.

Thelma and her volunteers will cook in kitchens at the County Hospital and De Laveaga Elementary School and the food

will be transported by the National Guard to the Civic Auditorium, where the Forestry Service will set up a mobile kitchen unit.

The logistics are mind-boggling. In all, 3500 guests are expected. And before the doors open, 500 dinners and gifts will have been delivered to home-bound seniors by volunteers.

"It's an amazing display of community spirit and generosity," says Marcia Margolin, executive director of the Grey Bears. "The list of participants numbers in the thousands and the result is an enormous event with the feeling and spirit of one's own family."

Each guest will be met at the door and escorted to a seat by students from the high schools who volunteer their time. On Saturday, the auditorium will be decorated with trees donated by the schools. And each guest will get a hand-decorated placemat made by local elementary schoolchildren.

"Hundreds of volunteers will be seating and greeting, name tagging, serving, pouring, passing out flowers and goodies, slicing bread and performing a multitude

of other activities," says Marcia Margolin.

Hours of entertainment will be donated by local performers.

Sunday marks the 9th year that the Grey Bears, a volunteer senior organization, has sponsored the dinner. "Our intention was that the Grey Bears would present a Christmas dinner for those people alone who had no one to spend Christmas with," says Marcia. That first dinner, nine years ago, drew about 350 people and the numbers have grown every year since. Everyone 60 and over is invited to attend the free event.

The Grey Bears are also known for the weekly brown bags of fresh produce they provide free to the senior community. Members go into the fields of local growers after harvest and pick the "gleanings". In addition, the organization receives surplus commodities.

The Grey Bears will be accepting home baked goods for dessert right up to Sunday during the dinner. Anyone who would like to contribute to this event should contact the Grey Bears at 427-3000 or mail their contribution directly to 1298 Fair Ave., 95060.

Hundreds of volunteers have been busy making favors, getting ready for the 9th annual Grey Bears' Christmas dinner for seniors on Sunday at Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium. Everyone over 60 is invited to the party.

