



Mike McCollum

Eddie Duron serves Esteban Olmeda, left, and Juan Benavidez.

## *Elderly earthquake victims have early Thanksgiving*

By CHELA ZABIN  
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More than 90 people celebrated Thanksgiving two days early with a dinner at the United Presbyterian Church of Watsonville on East Beach Street yesterday.

Most of the celebrants are regulars at the meals provided by the Golden Age Nutrition Program, which has been operating in the church since the Oct. 17 earthquake damaged the program's usual quarters across the street. Others came to be with friends and to celebrate the holiday with food and music.

Fay Galvani had nothing but praise for the meals program and for the multi-ethnic group that had assembled.

"Look at this food," she said, gesturing towards her turkey dinner. "They serve us like kings and queens. I love this place, it's so international. It's the real melting pot of America."

For many, the program has taken on a special significance since the earthquake because

it's given them the chance to talk about the quake with their peers.

"It helps," Betty Kantorik said, adding that she thinks getting through the quake's aftermath is particularly hard for older people. "People your own age understand what you're going through."

Some of the participants lost their homes in the quake, said Beverley Calvo, director of seniors services at Food and Nutrition Services, which runs the meals program. Others lost their spouses to heart attacks shortly afterwards.

Eugenia Walsh, who comes to the meals regularly, said she is still without heat and a working stove at her home, which makes being able to come to the program even more important.

"I'm really grateful for the food and the company," she said, and for the chance participants have for "sharing our experiences together."

Walsh does secretarial work for the program's Watsonville

site. She was there when inspectors came to look over the office after the quake. Initially, it looked like the building had come through OK. Then the inspectors saw that there was extensive damage to the roof.

"I was trying to persuade them to put a yellow tag on instead of red, but they put on a red one," she said. Repairs on the building may be completed by next week, she said.

Walsh said she hadn't finished picking up at home, where "the interior was a shambles" after the quake.

Kantorik said her daughter, who lives in Virginia, called her every day for nearly two weeks after the quake. Her daughter told her she'd come at take her home to Virginia. But Kantorik, who has lived in Watsonville for 10 years, said she told her "No, you're not."

"Those first few days, you shake and shiver" every time a truck goes by, she said. "It's really something to go through. But I really like it here. I would hate to have to get out."