

Food from the Heart's Pure Mission

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By Anjalie Tandon



Courtesy Photo

ILL BUT WELL-FED: Food from the Heart volunteers — including the organization's founder, Evelyn Jacob— work in the Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church kitchen each week to cook and then deliver gourmet meals to sick people around Santa Barbara.

Santa Barbara Nonprofit Feeds Sick People with Gourmet Meals

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By [Anjalie Tandon](#)

One of the most sincere nonprofits in town, Food from the Heart provides the purest form of service to the Santa Barbara community: home-cooked meals for sick people. The organization was founded in 1994 by Evelyn Jacob, a one-woman cooking machine who initially focused on those with AIDS. But it soon became apparent that people going through other medical issues were also in need.

“There was a real need for this, and they expanded it then to encompass everybody who was going through a health crisis,” said Kelly Onnen, the current executive director. “It’s kind of a forgotten group. There are other safety nets in place for the homeless and for seniors, but homebound and ill is kind of a forgotten cause.”



By Courtesy Photo

Food From the Heart

Food from the Heart now serves a maximum of 160 people in Goleta and Santa Barbara who are referred from various hospitals and medical facilities around the area. Once a week, they receive what Onnen describes as all-organic, "restaurant-quality, beautifully prepared, beautifully presented food" that will typically feed one person for four to five days. There's usually an entrée, casserole, two salads, dessert, fresh fruit, and bread. Ingredients are selected specifically for their healing qualities and prepared by Aaron Casale, their chef of five years.



By Courtesy Photo

Food From the Heart

The gourmet quality and presentation is key. Explained Onnen, "People are constantly telling us such things as, 'Hey, I've been doing chemo. I have not been able to eat for a month because the treatment has diminished all my desire to eat. But when you present it to me like that, I'm eating. You've made me eat.'"

The almost entirely volunteer team meets Monday through Wednesday mornings in the kitchen of Trinity Lutheran Evangelical Church on North La Cumbre Road, where they prepare and package the meals that go out every Wednesday afternoon. "Once you deliver the food to the individual, and you see how necessary and important that human contact is, it just melts you," said Leslie Armstrong, one of the many volunteers who drive around town dropping off the food.



Food From the Heart

There's also a group of volunteers that harvests fruit trees every Tuesday morning. "If you have even one orange tree in your backyard, we'd be more than happy to come pick that orange tree," said volunteer Tom Urban. "No property is really too small or really too big to harvest."

Onnen said new volunteers are welcomed all the time, as are donations to help keep the nonprofit thriving. It's guaranteed to warm your heart, as well. "Having a visit from somebody every week and having a bag of food brought to you every week is huge, as much for the nutrition as it is for the soul," said Onnen. "The name is perfect: Food from the Heart, because it really is. It is delivered with love, and there's a lot of good karma that goes in every bag."