



It takes a dedicated crew to run a monthly pancake breakfast.
From left are Don Smith on omelets, Dean Oldenburg on pancakes, and Rose Raczykowski on ham and eggs.

A Plethora of Pancakes

Monthly Lyle Lions Club breakfasts yield money for community service

By Jeanie Senior

The first Saturday of every month, the comforting aroma of pancakes wafts from the Lyle Lions Club Community Center.

This is the 25th year Lions Club members have served their pancake breakfast, which draws people from around the mid-Columbia area—from Goldendale, High Valley and White Salmon to Dufur and The Dalles.

That is a lot of pancakes during 25 years, and a lot of breakfasts, for that matter: at least 43,603, according to Joan Titus.

"We three have been with it since day one, working at it since it started," she

says, including her husband, Jim, and Dean Oldenburg. "We've been keeping records pretty close from the time we started."

The club initially served breakfast at the Lyle Women's Club, and shifted the location in 1997 when the community center opened. Joan credits Lions Dean and Darla Brashers for visiting another club that served a breakfast as a fundraiser.

"They brought the idea back to our

Lions Club and said they thought it would be a good thing to do," she says.

Throughout the years, pancake breakfast earnings have funded contributions to the Lions Sight and Hearing Foundation, guide dog training, and scholarships for graduates of Lyle High School, as well as other school and community activities.

"Depending on the amount of money we have, we usually give at least two \$750 scholarships," Joan says. "One year we gave six."

The club also has a fund for people who lose their homes to fire. At Christmastime, the Lions Club provides Christmas baskets to the needy. In 2013, the Lions distributed 81 baskets, benefiting almost 300 people.

Pancake breakfast money—along with grants from Lions Club International and Klickitat County—helped build the community center.

Breakfast is served from 7 to 10 a.m., with the biggest crowd arriving between 8:15 and 9 a.m.

"We have our regulars," Joan says of the diners.

The cost is \$6 for adults, \$3 for children ages 6 to 12, and free for children younger than 6. Breakfast includes unlimited pancakes, an omelet or ham and eggs, as well as coffee or tea and juice.

"It's a bargain," Joan says. "People love it."

"Isn't this fabulous?" asks breakfast regular Harry Moss, carrying a full breakfast plate to a table and sitting next to his wife, Sharon, and their friend Colleen Hatfield.

Dean Oldenburg, who is the pancake specialist, says most people eat one or two pancakes "but we have a couple of guys who like three," he says. "Every once in a while people will have two, then they'll say, 'That's pretty good, I'll have one more.'"

The omelet chef is Don Smith, who jokes that he graduated from ham and



Locals arrive at the Lyle Lions Club Community Center for a hearty pancake breakfast, and enjoy socializing afterward.

eggs to omelets. At the other end of the grill, Rose Raczykowski cooks eggs to order and ham.

Lions members have turned the breakfast's organization into a fine art. On Thursday, a club member buys up to 18 dozen eggs and about 14½ pounds of ham, as well as other items.

On Friday, three people do prep work for two hours. They shred cheese and cut tomatoes, ham, green onions and green peppers for the omelets.. They also prepare the blueberry compote served with pancakes.

"That's kind of important," Joan says. "We either pick the blueberries or they are donated. We don't just get blueberry sauce in a can and use that."

It took 10 pounds of frozen blueberries to make the compote for the March breakfast. The club even bought a freezer this year and designated it for the 120 to 140 pounds of blueberries used every year.

Dean arrives at the community center about 5:15 a.m. on Saturday to get the grills heating and start coffee in two

100-cup coffeemakers. The rest of the 10 workers arrive between 6:30 and 7 a.m.

"It takes 10 people to run it," Joan says. "We always love it when we have somebody jump in and help us with clean up."

The workers usually get done with their work about 11 a.m.

Club member Annie Maguire's chickens get the meal scraps.

"We have minimal garbage," Dean points out.

Any extra ingredients that won't keep until the next breakfast usually go to the senior meal served at the community center each week.

In years past, the number of breakfasts served averaged between 140 to 160. That dropped to 74 last November, likely because of bad weather, and was 115 in February. The March 1 total was 132.

Lions members say they hope the numbers will start to grow again, and yield more money for the club's service projects.

"We all do this for the community," Dean says. "That's what it's about." ■