An Orphan Grain Train truck was in Wauneta Monday morning to deliver the first shipment of raw food supplies to Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska. The organization now has enough food on hand to package 60,000 meals for people in need.

By Sheri Hink

The Wauneta Breeze

Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska is officially up and running. They received their first big shipment of food materials Monday and passed their Health Department inspection last Wednesday, Aug. 15.

The nonprofit organization, based in Wauneta, allows volunteers to package nourishing food to be delivered via the Orphan Grain Train to children in need both domestically and throughout the world.

With the completion of the remodel to the facility just north of Sinner's Paint and Body Shop

and receipt of the shipment of food, Mercy Meals leaders say they are ready for volunteers to come package the food.

The delivery on Monday grew their stock of food up to enough to make 60,000 meal packages. Once the meals are packaged by volunteers they will be shipped to children in need via the Orphan Grain Train.

Pastor Greg Stuckwisch explained that many of the children who will receive these meals are so poor and hungry that their parents make them "mud pies" out of mud, oil and salt to ease the pain in their children's stomachs because there is no food to feed them.

Mercy Meals is working to make sure these children have nourishing meals to eat instead of mud pies.

Volunteers and donations needed

The organization needs volunteers to come package meals as well as donations to help purchase more food.

"We now have enough food to begin processing. If volunteers could help raise money to purchase more food as they package the meals we'll always have food to package," said Pastor Stuckwisch.

Because of the low cost of food, it does not take much to help feed many. "A donation of $7.50 per month would feed someone for an entire year," explained board member Annette Long.

With current food expenses, meals packaged by Mercy Meals cost $0.10 each and donations of any size are welcomed by the organization.

“All donations to Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska go directly to purchase food and not for administrative costs. Others have donated monies for those expenses,” Pastor Stuckwisch explained.

Those who would like to make a financial donation may do so by contacting Mary Haarberg, treasurer at 308-882-5642, Long at 308-394-5252 or Pastor Stuckwisch at 308-394-5206.

Meal assembly requires a group of eight to 10 volunteers. Volunteers may sign up individually or as a group. Individuals of any age as well as youth groups, school organizations and any denomination of church groups are welcome.

Volunteering at Mercy Meals will be a family-friendly affair. Young children are welcome to join their parents and older siblings. Young children can either play at the house or color the shipping boxes that will be sent to people in need throughout the world.

Those interested in volunteering to package food should contact a Mercy Meals board member.

Fair fundraiser

Four area Lutheran churches (St. Paul south of Wauneta, Redeemer in Wauneta, Trinity in Palisade and Zion in Imperial) hosted a bratwurst supper at the Chase County Fair last week. During the event they served over 200 people and raised almost $2,300.

“We’d like to thank everyone who came out to support us at the Fair last week,” said Pastor Stuckwisch.

Local leadership

The southwest Nebraska chapter of Mercy Meals is based in Wauneta.

Board members for Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska include Jan Coone, Laurie Kerchal, Harold and Jan Nordhausen, Kent and Elaine Haarberg, Mary Haarberg, Rick and Cindy Einspahr, Janet Keiser, Annette Long, Pastor Stuckwisch, and Pastor Keith Wellman.

Organizational volunteers include Kevin Kerchal, Jim Haarberg, Bill and Kim Wilson, Rich Keiser, Jim Long, Janet Stuckwisch, Annie and Chris Pursley.