

Mercy Meals celebrates rewarding first year

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska celebrated its first anniversary earlier this week. The organization enables volunteers to package nutritious meals for hungry people around the world. (Sheri Hink-Wagner | The Wauneta Breeze)

By Christi Christner

The Wauneta Breeze

Each year about 5 million children die from starvation throughout the world. These drastic numbers don't even include the adults.

The number has gone down within the last couple of years, but not without the help of several organizations.

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One of these organizations is Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska. This organization is one of many that packages all of the essential amino acids needed for people to remain healthy.

Mercy Meals which is located in Wauneta is celebrating its first anniversary.

There are carbohydrates, protein, vitamins and minerals, soy, dehydrated vegetables and chicken flavored vitamin and mineral powder in the packaged meals.

Each meal costs approximately 10 cents and has six meals in one package.

Pastor Greg Stuckwisch, previous pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church, was one of the first people to think about starting a Mercy Meals facility in Wauneta.

He took a group of people interested in helping from Redeemer Lutheran, St. Paul Lutheran and Zion Lutheran Churches to the Mercy Meals site in Norfolk, Neb.

While there they toured the facilities and came back with an idea of what they would need to do to start a Mercy Meals house in Wauneta.

After coming back, the group needed a place to package the food that wasn't located five hours away.

They didn't have to look far to find a building that would suffice for packaging and storing the food.

Volunteers started remodeling Pastor Stuckwisch's father's house right away.

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Some of the walls had to be knocked down to make room for the two packaging lines and the floors and sinks were redone. The building was dedicated Sept. 16, 2012.

Volunteers from all over Southwest Nebraska, Colorado and other countries have flocked in to help package meals.

Within a year, the small building located on Tecumseh Avenue has packaged 231,858 meals.

The goal of the year was to package a total of 250,000 meals.

For the upcoming year, Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska has set a goal to package 500,000 meals.

Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska has not only helped feed the starving but has also brought a community of people together.

There have been many teenagers who have volunteered time whether their class went during the school day or a youth group or church group went to help out.

Many adults and even retired people in Wauneta have helped out in a huge way.

After leaving a session that might of lasted two hours or so volunteers leave with new memories and a feeling of accomplishment, Mercy Meal leaders said.

Those who would like to volunteer their time to help this cause can go to tomercymealsofsouthwestnebraska.org or [facebook.com/MercyMealsOfSouthwestNebraska](https://www.facebook.com/MercyMealsOfSouthwestNebraska) to find contact information. Those with questions or who wish to volunteer can also call Pastor Keith Wellman at (308) 394-5562 or Annette Long at (308) 883-2052.

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Those who would like to donate can mail donations to Mercy Meals of Southwest Nebraska at P.O. Box 474 Wauneta, NE 69045.