

Friendship meals will go from \$3 to \$3.25

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Workers at the Liberal Senior Center dish out Friendship Meals Wednesday afternoon. The suggested contribution for a meal will rise at the beginning of October, from \$3 to \$3.25, according to program manager Vicki Haverfield. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

By ROBERT PIERCE

- Leader & Times

Starting Oct. 1, local people who get food from the Friendship Meals program will have to pay a little more for those services.

The Liberal Senior Center is increasing its suggested contribution for meals from \$3 to \$3.25, and manager Vicki Haverfield said the small rise in price is due mostly to an expected cut in funding for the program.

“If the federal government decides to cut us, that will cut quite a bit from us,” she said. “They need to call their legislator and tell them how important these meals are for their parents or whoever gets them.”

One-third of the funding for Friendship Meals comes from the federal government, 15 to 20 percent comes from the State of Kansas, and 50 percent comes from the contributions of the people.

Haverfield said the last time the price of a Friendship Meal had been upped was four years ago.

“With the cost of living and the cost of everything, that’s not really too bad – coming up 25 cents,” she said.

Haverfield said the money allocated from the federal government is formulated through the 2010 Census, but she said there is a problem with those numbers.

“That’s an old census, and we’ve got a lot more people since then,” she said. “That’s how their budgeting us. They take so much percentage of people you have in your area, and that’s how much funding you get.”

Haverfield said donations keep Friendship Meals afloat, and along with the increase of donations for those 60 and older, younger people who take advantage of the meals will pay \$5.25 for food through the program.

Contributions are purely voluntarily, but those using Friendship Meals are asked to be as generous as they can.

“It helps the people to be able to stay in their homes and not have to go to a nursing home,” Haverfield said.

Haverfield said there are ways to help pay the cost of Friendship Meals, and children of seniors can do just that.

“They could sponsor their mother and father and get gift certificates,” she said. “We can give out gift certificates so they can pay. A lot of times at Christmas, they don’t know what to buy them. They can buy them a meal, and they’d be surprised how much stuff that’ll take off. A lot of them are just living on their social security, and that’s not even enough to make ends meet.”

Food stamps are likewise accepted as payment for a meal.

Haverfield estimated the Liberal Senior Center has had Friendship Meals for more than 20 years. She now orders about 110 meals per day, and those are divided between people who eat at the center itself and homebound seniors.

“Some of them get frozen,” she said. “On the homebound, it kind of varies. I think we’re up to about 67 homebound right now. I just got two more. I do order 110 meals per day.”

The new price will take effect Oct. 1. Haverfield said Friendship Meals is important for more than just food.

“They also get to talk to people,” she said. “Some people never see anybody.”

Friendship Meals is a service of Elder Care and is funded by customer contributions and a contract with the Southwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging in cooperation with the Kansas Department on Aging and Disability Services and the Administration on Aging, Health and Human Services.

People can file a grievance with the meal manager, calling Friendship Meals at (620) 792-1241

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or writing Friendship Meals at Box 1364, Great Bend, KS 67530-1364.