

# Meals of Hope volunteers package 60,000 meals for local families in need

By Jarrett Whitener  
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The Lake Chatuge-Hiawassee Rotary Club hosted its Second Annual Meals of Hope food packaging day at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center on Saturday, April 13.

More than 200 volunteers came out to the event to help package food for those in need and get the meals ready to send off.

“What we are doing is packaging meals for local distribution,” said Kerry Clem, organizer of the event. “The organization that helps us with this is Meals of Hope, which is a Rotary-sponsored organization out of Naples, Florida, and they do millions of packages of this food every year.”

“Each one of the packages has six servings, so we are going to do 60,000 servings or 60,000 meals, which is 10,000 packets. Half of them are going to be mac and cheese, with the other half being pasta and tomato sauce.

“They are designed to where even a middle school kid could take it home, boil six cups of water, pour the packet in, let it simmer, and have a meal for the whole family.”

These meals are boxed and sent to local food pantries that distribute them to families in need over the summer, when children are home more often.

“The reason we are doing this is because in Towns County, between all the schools, literally 50% of the kids are on the reduced or free meal program,” said Clem. “Then you have another roughly 400 of them on the backpack program, which means that the food pantry sends them home with food on Friday because there’s nothing at home for them over the weekend.

“We do this recognizing that those kids go home and have siblings and other family members in the same boat. So, the key for doing this is doing it before school lets out, because once school lets out, they are no longer on that backpack program, and 60,000 meals is just enough to get them through the summer before they go back to school in the fall.”



Volunteers made good use of the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center for the Meals of Hope event on Saturday, April 13. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

All of the meals are for the community, with the packages being funded by local sponsors who help with the program.

“We had 60 sponsors of the event, and these are local businesses and individuals who put up money to help us fund this,” said Clem. “Each of these packets costs right at \$1.50 to serve six people, so when you are doing 10,000 of them, that’s \$15,000. So, the sponsors help us fund this, and the volunteers come in to help us pack these meals.”

The many volunteers for the event were divided into groups, with one half working on the pasta and the other on the macaroni and cheese.

Last year, the event culminated in 50,000 packaged meals, meaning this year, they were able to supply an additional 10,000 meals, giving the organization room to provide for more families in need over the summer.

“It’s a great thing for the county, and it’s good to be able to supply food for these kids as summer closes in,” said Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales, who attended the event. “We are very happy to be able to support this ... It’s so good to see these community folks out here coming together and working hard.”



Now in its second year, Meals of Hope is a charitable endeavor by Lake Chatuge-Hiawassee Rotary Club. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Enotah Garden Club Plant and Bake Sale April 18

The Enotah Garden Club will welcome spring with a Plant and Bake Sale on April 18th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at City Hall, Mayors Park in Young Harris.

Plants, herbs, hanging baskets, in addition to cakes, pies, and cookies will be on sale. A variety of vendors and their wares will also be available.

A garden cart filled with garden related items will be



raffled off at the closing of the sale. You do not have to be present to win.

Come support one of your local garden clubs.

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## Easter Pictures...from Page 1A



These youngsters won baseball gloves at the Egg Hunt.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson



The Egg Hunt experienced a pretty good turnout in 2019, especially considering many thought the event might end up getting rained out.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson



This adorable little girl had lots of fun filling her “Frozen” Easter bucket with plenty of candy-filled eggs.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson