

Food is a Ministry

It's midweek at DUMC, which means another Wonderful Wednesday event in the Fellowship Hall. With word spreading of a place for families to gather, have dinner together, and meet others, weekly attendance has grown to more than 90. The evening revolves around food, family, and Christian fellowship.



The food part is why Dianna Raker is working in the kitchen Wednesday morning many hours before others will arrive with their families and appetites. The night is staffed by a group of dedicated volunteers who have become like family to Dianna and each other. "Wonderful Wednesday Dinners are a time of fellowship—without pizza," says Dianna, "through which I've been able to meet and serve some really wonderful people."

Coming from a long line of great family cooks, Dianna holds a culinary degree from Johnson & Wales University Rhode Island. Following college, she spent 15 years in the restaurant business but then made the decision in 1999 to spend "normal hours" with her children and husband while reclaiming her weekends. Although Dianna has done kitchen ordering at DUMC for the past 16 years, she just tackled the Wonderful Wednesday project in 2015. This particular night's menu features ham, mac & cheese, green beans...and for dessert—fresh-baked apple cake with caramel glaze—signature dishes of Dianna's that have become favorites of the Wednesday night crowd.

The vision is to relocate both the Fellowship Hall and kitchen with expanded space and capabilities, therefore allowing larger groups to be served. At present, the maximum number of guests seated at tables is 140. The new facility would grow that number to 240. "Food is a ministry—a celebration that invokes memories of the past and hopes for the future," observes Dianna.

Tools of the cooking trade are stored neatly in numerous drawers, stacked on shelves, or waiting service under metal countertops. The inventory includes various sizes of knives, spatulas, aluminum mixing bowls, and a few items that defy description.

When asked for her favorite "tool" in the entire collection, she walks to an adjoining room and flips a switch. "The water is constantly heated to 150 degrees and it finishes an entire load in three minutes," she says proudly. "It's a dishwasher."