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## CURRENT WEATHER

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## FEATURES

## Reason for the season

[Brian Wilkinson](#)

(Updated: Thursday, December 31, 2009, 12:00 AM)

More than 350 attend event

"Outpouring," a community dinner and toy and clothes drive, lived up to its name Thursday.

Generous servings of turkey, ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, along with holiday music and bags of sweet tangerines, children's toys, adult and children's heavy jackets, sweaters, hats and gloves, combined for the first-time Christmas Eve event at Oakhurst Community Center.

Entertainment during the evening was provided by Taylor Fenton and Bob and Dawn Wallace.

More than 350 people attended.

The event was the brainchild of Jami Fenton, who is affiliated with the Destiny Training Center and the Epicenter Prayer Group.

"The event was amazing," Fenton said. "The response of community volunteers who wanted to help was incredible."

Kathy McCorry, executive director of the Oakhurst Area Chamber of Commerce, said the event started out small but grew quickly.

"The initial plan was to provide a free meal to those in need and seniors," McCorry said. "Then the idea for a toy drive for the children came up, followed by the clothes drive, due to the recent cold snap."

Once the word got out, she said, donations from the community started pouring into the chamber office. More than 500 articles of clothing, 200 toys and 50 blankets were donated to distribute to people who needed them.

So much clothing was donated, in fact, that the Chamber plans to reopen Kliever's Closet. Started by last year's Chamber Volunteer of the Year Shirley Bailey, Kliever's Closet was housed in the Madera County Workforce office in Oakhurst to provide clothing to men and women re-entering the work force.

Because of a downsizing, McCorry said the space is no longer available, so the Chamber will store some clothing in its new office at 40160B, Highway 41, above Nelson Press and 12 Toes Productions, for people who need work clothes.

Much of the leftover clothing will be returned to a thrift store run by the Well, a Fresno church. The church allowed volunteers from the Outpouring to select clothes for the Oakhurst event.

"There are a lot of people in the community struggling, and we wanted to provide a warm and inviting environment for those in need and those who wanted to be with other people," Fenton said.

"This event is by the community, for the community, to bless the community," volunteer Candy MacAlpine said.

The Pines Resort catering department, under the direction of James Boutin, served the meals that were supplied by members of the community, and Yosemite High School student body government leaders assisted children in picking out toys.

"I am overwhelmingly grateful to the Pines crew who came in with their equipment and served food the entire evening," Fenton said. "That relieved us of a huge undertaking."

Fenton said families throughout the community provided enough food for 400 people and that leftover meals were given to the Oakhurst Senior Citizen Center to be used Christmas Day.

"The greatest blessing was not only giving but the new relationships made with other like-hearted people, who love their community, are grateful to God and want to give back," Fenton said. "The evening was truly an outpouring of love, generosity and good will towards others."

Major sponsors of the event were Grocery Discount Center, Yosemite Bank, Raley's Supermarket, Oakhurst Area Chamber of Commerce, Pizza Factory, Nelson Press, Sierra Telephone, Big O Tires, Firesign, Chukchansi Gold Resort and Casino, Summer Peck Produce, Dr. Nicolaas Reijne, Encore Fine Cabinetry and Frito-Lay Inc.

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Brian Wilkinson/Sierra Star

Brianne Harding and Shane Kish were two of five employees from The Pines Resort Catering Department who volunteered their time to serve at the Outpouring community dinner on Christmas Eve at the Oakhurst Community Center.



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