

# "Friendsgiving" pulls Hoosick Falls together for holiday meal

Community center hopes event sparks a continued tradition

By Tom Momberg, Bennington Banner

The Hoosick Armory Youth Center and Community Coalition hosted its very first "Friendsgiving" on Thursday, Thanksgiving Day, to deliver food to families and host a supper of its own.

Before sitting down to Thanksgiving supper with conventional flare in the basement of the HAYC3 Armory on Thursday, over 45 volunteers spent the week preparing pies, turkey and vegetables to make dinner available to anyone who wanted one.

More than 30 meals were assembled in "to go" containers, and delivered to singles and families around town, as well as to the Salvation Army. Then, the volunteers sat down to a 40-seat dinner with their friends and neighbors. Families came in as far as Cambridge, N.Y. and Bennington to join in the holiday celebration.

HAYC3 board member Rick Tinkham said "Friendsgiving" is perfect for people in the community who may not have anywhere else to go, such as people with family out of state or people who live alone.

"In our community, there are a lot of people who don't fall neatly into the need for the classic food shelter, but we have a few who may not have anyone to spend Thanksgiving with," he said. "Then there are people like us, who want to do something on Thanksgiving that's helping other people, but there's not a lot right in this area."

Thanksgiving meal donations may have some stigma as charity, but the team at HAYC3 thinks otherwise.

"This fits into the concept that HAYC3 is: It's community for everyone," Tinkham said. "It's for the youth, and to bring the community together. The people that are here today, are people that would otherwise have a quiet Thanksgiving, and there is no qualification."

Hoosick Falls Mayor David Borge and his wife volunteered for the dinner. He said he hopes "Friendsgiving" returns in future years, because it's ideal for people who may not be able to get out of town.

"When you look at the weather: Maybe a lot of people planned to get out and couldn't," the village mayor said. "Plans change, and anyone is welcome here: Right in the center of the village. It's a great way to say let's give thanks."

Between community donations and some extra money from the operating funds, volunteers cooked 40 full-sized turkeys in the HAYC3 Armory's certified kitchen, anticipating the possibility of some extra people stopping by.

All of the extra food was frozen in preparation for the Empty Bowl Project in December, in which Hoosick Falls Central School students craft pottery bowls to be filled up at a HAYC3 fundraiser for local food shelves.