

# Local food-packing effort enters 12th year, seeks volunteers

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The Feed My Starving Children food packing event at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Manchester last year topped 816,000 in meals packed and boxed. Signs along the gymnasium wall bear the names of participating organizations and businesses.

What started 11 years ago as one church's effort to address the childhood malnutrition problem around the world has evolved into an annual program involving volunteers and donors numbering in the thousands from dozens of organizations and businesses throughout the area.

In 2007, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Manchester first held an event to assemble food in meal-sized bags. The effort had what seemed then to be an ambitious goal of packing 100,000 meals for distribution by Feed My Starving Children [FMSC], a nonprofit organization based in Minnesota's Twin Cities area.

The program proved to be popular in attracting volunteers to pack the meals and financial support to pay for the ingredients, and the church's goals and needs for contributions and volunteers have risen steadily.

Last year, with a goal of 650,000 meals and a "dream" target of 750,000, the response in funding and volunteer numbers enabled the event to reach a packing total of 816,480 meals. On the way to that record, the event topped the four million mark of meals packed since the program began.

"Numbers are a way to measure where we started and where we are now," said Janie Wolfangel, a church member involved in the program's leadership. "The important thing, though, is the children in numerous countries who have benefited from the program."

Last year's meal volume was distributed in Syria, El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti through church-related organizations operating in those nations. In total, the food packages were enough to provide 2,236 kids one meal a day for a year.

According to Wolfangel, this year's 12<sup>th</sup> annual meal packing event will be held at the church Oct. 10-14 and has a goal of 850,000 meals. That quantity will require nearly \$190,000 in donations and some 3,000 volunteers.

The packing occurs in two-hour shifts, with adults and children [ages 5 and up] filling the bags at assembly-line workstations set up in the church's gymnasium.

Volunteer registration begins Aug. 13 on the church's website, [GoodShepherdLutheran.com](http://GoodShepherdLutheran.com). Volunteers can sign up as individuals or register with families, friends, co-workers, athletic teams or other groups.

Each of the MannaPack meals contains white rice, textured soy protein, vegetarian flavoring and dehydrated carrots and potatoes.

With ingredients for each meal costing 22 cents, a \$50 donation pays for a 216-meal MannaPack box, while \$80 feeds one child for a year. Donations can be made online at [mpstl.org](http://mpstl.org), via checks sent by mail and made payable to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Pack #1810-094AU, 327 Woods Mills Road, Manchester, MO 63011.

Checks also can be made payable to FMSC, Pack #1810-094AU, and sent to 55 Exchange Court, Aurora, IL 60504, Attention: Carrie Wiggins.

As part of its fundraising efforts, the church also has scheduled a golf outing at the Falls Golf Course in O'Fallon Sept. 30. Details and registration information will be announced later.

Wolfangel noted FMSC consistently has earned the top four-star rating from Charity Navigator, an independent watchdog organization that rates charities based on their transparency, financial health and accountability.