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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications  
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer  
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

**Popular Community Meal program continues October 26, 2009**

*Summary: In January 2009, Stevens County residents gathered to prepare warm, healthy meals to serve to the community as part of a project called Community Meal. A collaborative effort designed to promote a strong, vibrant community, continues this fall with the next meal on October 26, 2009.*

(October 20, 2009)-In January 2009, Stevens County residents gathered to prepare warm, healthy meals to serve to the community as part of a project called Community Meal. A collaborative effort designed to promote a strong, vibrant community, continues this fall with the next meal on October 26, 2009.

Since its first gathering, Community Meal has grown steadily to become a highly valued community event. The project now serves 250 people each month and a committed group of University of Minnesota, Morris students and Stevens County residents have united to ensure its success and longevity. Community Meal project has established a reputation for its delicious menus and the warm, welcoming atmosphere, which accompanies each meal.

Community Meal is open and free to every member of the Morris-area community. Meals are served from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on the last Monday of every month. The final two meals of the year will be held October 26 and November 30, 2009. All community members are invited to help prepare the meal by arriving at the Senior Center any time between 3 and 5:30 p.m. the afternoon of the event. The Morris Senior Community Center is located at 603 Oregon Avenue.

Support for Community Meal is provided by a broad coalition of local businesses and organizations. This fall, the collaborating and sponsoring organizations include: Coborns Pomme de Terre Food Co-op Stevens Community Medical Center Morris Lions Club Bank of the West Morris Kiwanis, Stevens County Food Shelf Morris Senior Community Center and the University of Minnesota, Morris Office of Community Engagement.

Reflecting on the project, Carol McCannon, community member and project organizer said, "Community Meal was established to address several needs: the need for space to interact as a community and the need for healthy, accessible food. Many Morris area residents have begun to look forward to Community Meal for the opportunity to share food and conversation with new faces while others have come to rely on the event for the opportunity to eat a warm, healthy meal. Community Meal has proven to be an effective response to the needs of our community and its residents."

"Community Meal was organized with the belief in mind that sharing food can be a transformative experience that promotes rich human relationships and an interconnected community. Community Meal confirms the unique role that sharing food can play in strengthening a community and we are excited to continue that process this fall," states University of Minnesota, Morris Community Engagement Student Representative Lauren Dennhardt.

For more information about Community Meal, contact University of Minnesota, Morris Community Engagement Student Representative Matthew Johnson, 320-589-3349 or joh06876@morris.umn.edu.

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