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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MORRIS

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[Community Meal Brings Morris Together](#)

MORRIS, Minnesota (December 12, 2016)—In 2009 Matthew Johnson '10 came up with the idea of hosting a community meal in Morris. The now-monthly event has been unifying the community ever since.

With the help of former community service and volunteerism coordinator Carol McCannon, Johnson was able to turn this idea into a regular event. The first Community Meal was held at Legacy Living and served 90—a healthy mix of students, elders, and families. The number of attendees has grown significantly since, and there now is an average attendance of 225.

As attendance at Community Meal grew, so did interactions between elders and students increased—a sign that the meals had been successful in bringing together a diverse group of people. It also meant that Legacy Living could no longer accommodate everyone, so the meal was moved to the Morris Senior Center and, finally, to Faith Lutheran Church.

Today the Morris community not only enjoys the meal; it also contributes to it. Initially farmers would donate extra crops, harvested by Office of Community Engagement (OCE) students and volunteers, to be served. But as attendance has increased, additional donors have pitched in food and supplies as well. By doing so, they have supported both the meal and the community, since revenue from food items purchased for the meal benefit local farmers and retailers.

“Food that is locally sourced is supporting the local economy, local farmers, the campus, and the community,” says Argie Manolis, coordinator of community engagement.

Some community meals also have themes that invite people to learn to cook and try foods that might be unfamiliar to them. For instance, the Native American meal has become an annual tradition. According to Manolis, they provide "a great opportunity for people to try out new cooking techniques and recipes."

The purpose of Community Meal is to bridge gaps between different populations in Morris and bring them together. There is no cost for this event, and all are encouraged to attend, regardless of religious or ethnic background.

Moving forward, OCE hopes to continue diversifying attendees and volunteers in the kitchen. To get involved, contact the Office of Community Engagement at 320-589-6457 or engagmnt@morris.umn.edu.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.

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