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News for Darien

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St. Luke's Thursday Community Suppers: Building Community Meal by Meal

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Have you ever driven down the Post Road on a Thursday and wondered about the red and white Community Supper signs? [Community Supper](#) might be the best kept culinary secret in town, except that it's not secret to the 100-plus folks who come week by week to share a \$1.00 meal in a friendly and welcoming environment.

For the past 10 years, Saint Luke's has hosted this weekly dinner, open to all.

"Our family attends Community Supper at least twice a month," says parishioner Meredith Olmstead. "It's truly one of the best things we do."

At first the supper was a simple way to allow her kids to build relationships with people of all backgrounds and ages, but soon Olmstead found herself drawn to share her own Cordon Bleu background and now

spearheads dinner preparation, with a group of friends, three times a year.

Imagine purchasing over 60 lbs. of beef or chicken or pork each week, along with hundreds of potatoes, carrots or other veggies. That's what supper supervisor Craig Jones does every Tuesday, recipe in hand.

"Most recipes are for 10-12 people, so we have to multiply by 16," he said.

Each week brings a new menu: corned beef and cabbage for St. Paddy's day, chicken pot pie on a cold winter's night, Italian sausage and peppers, meatloaf, pork tenderloin, beef stew, chicken parmigiana.

Most meals are prepared by volunteers and groups within Saint Luke's Parish, including the altar guild, youth group, men's group, young moms, and the parish staff.

But other local establishments have also gotten involved. Friends and supporters of the Community Supper include Michael Joseph's Catering, Jennifer's Kitchen, Atria Senior Living and the Noroton Fire Department, each donating and delivering a fully prepared meal two times a year.

Each week a Health Department trained "captain" is assigned to help groups navigate cooking for a crowd. The kitchen has earned A ratings all around — for health and safety from the town and for good taste and good cheer from the patrons.

A faithful group of volunteers prepares the green and fruit salads on Wednesday mornings, and Palmer's weekly donations keep the dessert table overflowing with sweets.

Diners come from Darien and surrounding communities to make friends, share stories and enjoy a meal together. Longtime volunteer, and team captain, Bev Kelsey sums her experience of this happy weekly gathering:

"The Community Supper has turned out to be a gift to all of us volunteering there — great community, great meals and shared experiences. Over the years friendships have been made, birthdays celebrated, and life events witnessed. We always get so much more out of it than we put in!"

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The Community Supper kitchen will close for the summer months, with **the last meal served on May 25**, but look for it to reopen in September. Follow the red signs. And come for supper. All are welcome!

— [The Rev. Susan Wyper](#) *is an associate pastor at St. Luke's Parish in Darien.*