

Church Group Spends Black Friday Giving, Not Shopping

St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church in Coopersburg spends "Black Friday" feeding Philly's homeless

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"No matter where you volunteer or who you help, it will make a difference in someone's life." - Laurie Mobley

Many people spend Black Friday shopping, some play football and still others decorate for Christmas or clean up after Thanksgiving. For a group of congregants and youth from St. James [Evangelical Lutheran](#) in Coopersburg, the day after Thanksgiving is for giving. They choose to take this day as an opportunity to gather together and head to Philadelphia where they feed the homeless at a shelter.



The tradition started with a woman fondly known as Mom Mobley. Every Thursday for the past 25 years, Patricia Mobley, from Philadelphia, PA, cooks a hot meal, drives to a designated area and feeds the homeless out of the trunk of her car. Since many other organizations feed the homeless on Thanksgiving, she moved it to Friday for that week so they can get two hot meals.

Laurie Mobley married into the family and the tradition. For the past twelve years, she has met a group of mostly youth and some adults at 9:00am on Black Friday where they drive to Philadelphia and help Mom Mobley at a local shelter. They generally return around 10:00pm. Laurie says she posts a list at the church and takes the first 20 people. "The list fills up quickly and there is usually a waiting list."

The Black Friday meal is a traditional Thanksgiving dinner all cooked by Patricia. Laurie was surprised that there were only about 200 people this year and attributes it to the unseasonably warm weather.



In addition to food, the group takes down hats, coats, blankets and sweaters donated by some local churches, including St. Michael's, St. Joe's and St. James.

One year, at the end of the line for coats, hats and blankets, a man requested a hat and there were none left. Laurie's son, who was a third grader at the time, gave the man the hat off of his head. Later he said to Laurie, "I hope that was okay."

"Every kid takes something different away from this experience", Laurie says thoughtfully, "but each one takes away a new sense of gratefulness."

What do the volunteers have to say?

Kaya Mobley - My favorite part was my job because I got to go to every table and see all the people when I served them bread and butter.

Baleigh Bradley - My favorite part was when all of the people arrive and looked happier than ever just to eat food.

Madison Hallman - Something that surprised me and made me think was when all the people came out to sit, because it hadn't occurred to me how many people were homeless, and it was very sad. These people were so sincere when we served them, with smiles and heartfelt thank you's.

Amanda Mobley - The part that makes me think is when we leave from feeding people at night and they are laying on grates in the alley with only boxes and blankets. We are lucky to have a house and family.

Jaclyn Bloch - My favorite part is just talking with the people we serve, being able to make them smile and laugh. The first time I saw a kid younger than me there, knowing they were living on the street, I was shocked. I think that's a lot of the reason I keep going, knowing that people sometimes don't have a choice and are just trying their best to survive. I just want to help them in any way I can and this is the little bit I can do.

Brianna Mobley - What impacts me the most is seeing small children and babies there with their mother's. It's sad to know little babies have to stay out in the cold for such long periods at a time.

Jon Bloch - Black Friday will never mean door-busting deals to me. It will bring back the memories of helping to serve Thanksgiving dinner to a group less fortunate than us. These people may not have a home, but they have shown us what is really important in life. This trip really makes you thankful for what you do have.

Diane Bloch - I, like many people in this area, really had no idea what it was like to be hungry or without a home. I had misconceptions about the type of people who were homeless; I found out in many cases these were people just like me. They didn't choose to be homeless but circumstances intervened.

Alyssa Riedy - I went to help feed the homeless before and I wanted to go again because it was actually fun and it feels good to help people.

Rachel Hassler - I think it is a great reminder this time of year of how much we have and how much we take for granted. Also how a small kindness can go a long way!

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