

## Warwick Community Kitchen Helps Many Local Citizens



Photo by Lon Tytell

Susan & Glen Dicks (front row, from left) generously matched the grant given to Victoria Garloch from the Sodexo Foundation to support some of the costs of the Community Kitchen. The matching funds were gratefully accepted by (back row, from left) Victoria's mother, Carrie, & Victoria.

By Lon Tytell

Victoria Garloch, a junior at the Warwick High School, cares about people. In November 2011, aiming to offer a hot meal and fellowship to individuals and families needing either, she initiated the Warwick Community Kitchen as part of her Girl Scout Gold Award project. Too big a project for just one person, Victoria elicited the assistance of her parents, Carrie and David, her sister, Rebecca, fellow Girl Scout Troop members, and volunteers from the community.

Since the first meal, volunteers under Victoria's guidance have continued preparing and serving meals every month at the Pine Island Elementary School as part of a ministry of the Vision Community Church. Victoria and her parents decide on the menu. If they have a sponsor, they work with them determining what will be served. All the monthly meals are prepared on the premises, with exception of the two Thanksgiving dinners, where the facilities of the Sugar Loaf Firehouse and the Pine Island Polish Legion were used in 2011 and 2012, respectively.

When guests arrived for the most

recent dinner on Fri., Apr. 26, Victoria shared some facts about the importance of fighting childhood hunger, with the help of two large posters designed by Victoria's mom. In addition to the meal, other activities help to make the event special. Every month, guests celebrating their birthday are recognized and greeted with the Happy Birthday song and a beautiful cake. Most recently, an Easter egg hunt was conducted, where children gathered plastic eggs filled with candy.

Victoria made a point to explain that the Community Dinners are not just about feeding those who might be hungry, saying, "I don't consider these dinners as Soup Kitchens where people who do not have money come to eat. I consider these dinners as one big, happy, family meal where everyone comes together, sits down, and enjoys each other's company. It's so rewarding going home after the dinners knowing I have helped the community. Many of my friends have told me the same feelings when I see them in school the following Monday."

**Volunteers & Guests Keep Coming Back**

Clare Finnegan, a volunteer at the

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Warwick Community Kitchen, explained her continued involvement by saying, "I first volunteered several months ago with my friend Taryn McCormick. Month after month we keep coming back because it is so rewarding being able to help others in the community. We always have a good time."

Two guests, Adam Weslowski and Raymond Parda, who have come to every dinner since its inception expressed their appreciation of the efforts of Victoria and the other volunteers.

One hundred-year-old Weslowski said, "The people are very nice to me. I met many new friends. I enjoy the variety of food served."

Parda, on behalf of his family, said "I like the way the people at the kitchen treat my family every time we come to enjoy a wonderful meal. The volunteers are always happy to see my nine-month-old son."

### Humanitarian Efforts Gain Wider Attention

Victoria's good deeds gained the attention of those outside of Pine Island, as she was recently awarded the Orange County Human Rights Commission Award, which cited her humanitarian efforts addressing the needs of the community. Victoria also received the Sodexo Youth Foundation Grant which will provide funding to help her with some of the costs incurred maintaining the kitchen.

Glenn and Susan Dicks, who are matching the grant received by Victoria, said, "The grant was awarded by the Sodexo Youth Foundation in recognition of the quality of Victoria's application in a strongly competitive environment."

### Upcoming Dinners Move to Sundays

Dinners scheduled from May through August will be held on Sunday to accommodate those farm workers working until dark on Fridays. The next dinner will be held on Sun., May 19, from 4 to 6 p.m.