

Spaghetti dinner attracts record numbers to help school in Belize

TAMARA FERGUSON

On Saturday, November 1, St. Simon's Oakville hosted its annual spaghetti dinner to raise funds for the church's fourth mission trip to San Pedro, Belize scheduled for July 2015.

Every other summer, St. Simon's and its youth lead a mission trip to Holy Cross Anglican School in Belize. The first trip was in 2009 with subsequent trips being in 2011 and 2013.

Next summer, approximately 20 youths and adults will be heading down to Belize, located on the northeastern coast of Central America, to help out at Holy Cross. The school was founded in 2006 by a couple from Virginia who, working as missionaries in Belize City at the time, saw a tremendous need for a new school in San Pedro.

Located in the incredibly poor neighbourhood of San Mateo, the school started with just a few dozen students but now boasts between 500–600 students, from preschool to grade eight.

Since opening its doors, Holy Cross has undergone considerable transformation with the help of many volunteers. It has expanded its classrooms, upgraded computer labs, added a sewing centre, covered outdoor playgrounds, improved sanitation, expanded solar power and much more.

During mission years, St. Simon's fundraises half the cost of sending its team to Belize through events such as pie-making, bake sales, barbeques and spaghetti dinners. Fundraising also takes place between missions to support a specific need or program at Holy Cross.

By far, one of the church's biggest fundraisers for Belize is the annual Spaghetti Dinner, and the November 1 event was no exception.

While the mission trips are important to the congregation and parishioners like to support the mission team with various fundraisers, this year's dinner in particular brought in record numbers with approximately 120

people in attendance, although only about 80 were expected to attend. This led to some scrambling and excitement, and certainly kept the kitchen "staff" and servers on their toes throughout the evening! The night was filled with fun, fellowship, great food and some fabulous entertainment provided by a few connected to the mission, including some musical youth.

Although the adults prepared the food and arranged most of the evening's details, the youth also played a big part by greeting guests, serving food and helping with the cleanup. It was only a month earlier that this same team came together to make 110 pumpkin and apple pies to sell for Thanksgiving, with all proceeds going towards the mission trip. Bake sales, also known as a "Belize Café" are a regular fixture once a month after Sunday services.

St. Simon's feels that the mission trips are a time of partnership with its youth and with the people of Holy Cross.



▲ Samantha Rideout, Meggie Haycraft and Adrianna Michell prepare to serve the spaghetti dinner to help sponsor the parish's mission trip to a school in Belize.

Photo: Tamara Ferguson

The church's goal for the mission trips is to show the love of Christ in practical ways that make tangible differences in people's lives and to allow God to work in us through the residents and workers of Holy Cross, so that together we can be God's hands in our world.

Tamara Ferguson is a member of St. Simon's Oakville. EMAIL: t.ferguson@utoronto.ca