

After Christmas Sales Slump

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**A WISH-LIST FULFILLED FOR MANY SENIORS**



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By Manolo Morales  
 Story Updated: Dec 25, 2008 at 5:56 PM HST

A hot meal for Christmas is a simple enough request.

But for about 800 homebound seniors, it took an all-out effort from volunteers to fulfill that wish.

The day begins early at Lanakila Meals On Wheels as volunteers form an assembly line, plating meals of stuffed chicken and mashed potatoes.

And there's a sense of urgency because 800 meals need to be packed and ready to be delivered, starting at 9 am.

275 volunteers signed up on this Christmas Day. Many realize the increasing sense of urgency in helping out. The demand for this service grows with the worsening economy.

Volunteer Susan Hong says, "I do feel that, and I wasn't going to come until last night and I thought you know what, I want to do this."

Now in it's 16th year, Meals on Wheels can't keep up with the demand. There's a waiting list of 100 seniors.

From Lanakila Meals on Wheels, Brandon Mitsuda says, "They constantly keep on calling, they constantly want to be part of us, we have 60 seniors calling a day, trying to figure out if they want to be part of our program. So the need is really great out there."

Public funding has fallen short, so the program also relies heavily on private support. Volunteers are a driving force to make things work.

For Karen Wakuzawa, helping out for the holidays is a family affair. Her husband, brother, sister, daughter, and niece are all pitching in.

They donate time and food knowing how much it can help. And in return, they get plenty of gratitude.

Wheels recipient, Grace Kam says, "So I'm really happy that I get my meals on wheels. I don't have to shop for meals anymore."

Another recipient, Gloria Ah Nee says, "We feel very privileged that we're getting meals on wheels. My husband has Alzheimer's and when he's not at daycare he can be a handful. I have a hard time preparing meals for

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dinner when he's home."

The program delivers meals all year round. So volunteers are always welcome.

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