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By ROBERT PIERCE

- Leader & Times

For five days a week, the Liberal Senior Center delivers friendship meals to the elderly in the community, and meals are also given to people walking into the center.

Much work goes into those meals, and some of that work is done from outside the center. For at least the last 21 years, the senior center has gotten its food elsewhere.

“They got the food at the college one year,” said friendship meals manager Vicki Haverfield. “They got it at the hospital. Then, we got it through Good Sam’s, and we’ve had it ever since I’ve been here.”

Before the food is made at Liberal Good Samaritan, however, menus are planned through ElderCare from Great Bend.

“They contract with Good Sam to bring food in,” Haverfield said. “They have a nutritionist at Great Bend and at Good Sam’s. They come in about every quarter. We do a menu review. Whenever they come in to do that, I tell them what my people want. They get tired of the same old stuff.”

Haverfield said a key component to the menu is Vitamin C, and the Great Bend nutritionist makes sure there is an adequate measure of it in meals.

“The state requires that,” she said. “The state gives us some funding for friendship meals. The nutritionist at Good Sam kind of tells her what she can put in the menu. I tell them what we want. We try to get it to where we can get enough Vitamin C.”

After the meals are prepared at Good Sam, they are then packaged and brought back to the senior center to be sealed in a steam table.

“The drivers take them out,” Haverfield said. “We have to keep them hot so that when people get them, they’re ready to serve.”

Haverfield said having the food made at Good Sam makes money for the nursing home.

“We pay a lot more money for Good Sam’s food than if we had our own kitchen,” she said. “We can’t keep workers that way.”

The senior center recently raised its suggested contribution for friendship meals from \$3 to \$3.25. Haverfield said while the facility receives some federal and state funding, most of the

funding for the meals comes from donations.

Haverfield said it would likely be more economical to look at other options for friendship meals.

“It’s a lot of work to make your own stuff,” she said. “Sometimes, after awhile, they were even getting commodities from the states. If we had a central kitchen like maybe 25 miles out, we’d go that place and get them instead of going to Good Sam’s. It’d be a lot cheaper. We do 110 meals a day, and \$5.25 was the last I heard that it was a meal that we had to pay them.”

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