

# Church puts 'Holy Grill' kitchen on wheels to feed the homeless



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**T**he smell of sizzling ham and grilling garlic rolls wafts out of the trailer, attracting a line of hungry patrons to its service window.

The Holy Grill, a trailer modeled after food trucks that proliferated across South Florida, is rolling to various Pompano Beach churches to feed the homeless. Volunteers from various churches and organizations keep it running five days a week.

On a recent Wednesday evening, the trailer's team parked outside the St. Lawrence Homeless Day Chapel in Pompano Beach and fired up the grill. No money was exchanged — only “Thank you” and “God bless.”

“It's survival — a necessity,” said Chazzie Reynolds, 52, as he sprinkled some pepper over his polystyrene container full of steaming ham and eggs. He has been out on the street since splitting from his wife, he said. Gesturing to his food, he said, “It's pure love.”

The trailer started rolling last year, after St. Nicholas Episcopal Church felt the call to take its mission to help homeless on the road.

Since the initiative began, its organizers say 4,300 hot breakfasts have been served from the trailer's sliding windows. It expanded to dinner service in May, so far serving about 1,400 dinners to the homeless, organizers say.

The food trailer also does weekend duty, catering to festivalgoers at events like the Celtic Festival in Marathon last January, where they served bangers, mash and Scotch eggs; the Diocesan Convention in Palm Beach Gardens; and the Holy Trinity parish festival in West Palm Beach. They also do lunch service every Wednesday at the Department of Transportation office, just west of Commercial Boulevard.

“Food trucks are all the rage,” said the Rev. Mark Andrew Jones, rector of St. Nicholas Episcopal, as he rode in the van toting the Holy Grill up Dixie Highway to a feeding place. “We're giving God's grace a chance to work.”

The number of homeless people living in shelters and on the streets of Broward County has grown by 6 percent over the past year, according to [a survey shared](#) with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. There were 2,450 homeless people counted across Broward in January, up from 2,302 homeless tallied in January 2016, according to Broward's Point-in-Time count.

According to census data, Pompano Beach has a smaller city population than Coral Springs, Miramar and Pembroke Pines, but Pompano has had a larger homeless population than those cities, partly because it's a beachside community, officials say.

Pompano Beach Mayor Lamar Fisher said he thinks the city would better equipped to address homelessness if there were a one-stop hub to help them. Plans to create such a destination in Pompano are starting to take shape, he said.

He envisions a center that would be modeled on West Palm Beach's The Lord's Place, an organization that offers health care, housing, job training and myriad other services. It's a nonprofit that combines the resources of the city, the county and law enforcement, along with other agencies to help offer head-to-toe help for the homeless. Several months ago, meetings at the First Baptist Church of Pompano spun off into a loose coalition of churches and others who want to help. They've been meeting monthly ever since, Fisher said.

"We have all these organizations helping the homeless," Fisher said. "It would be great to try to consolidate efforts so each organization would be able to do what they want to do in one central location."

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“Ultimately, we want one location for them to be helped and get assistance rather than have them dispersed,” Fisher said.

St. Nicholas Episcopal Church is part of the effort. Meantime, church members say they’ll be going to wherever they are needed — even outside Pompano — provided they are welcomed on the property.

The idea for The Holy Grill came from members of St. Nicholas, who noticed

many homeless people were having foot pain from walking long distances for services.

The church found the trailer at the Blueberry Festival last year in Brooksville. The church paid \$15,000 for it and another \$6,000 to fix it up.

“We thought, let’s bring them food so they don’t have to walk,” said Bob Reid, St. Nicholas’ sexton.

On a recent Wednesday, members of St. Nicholas were operating The Holy Grill and got dinner sizzling within 10 minutes. They’re careful not to leave any trash on church properties they visit.

Justin Mueller, 13, visiting her Pompano Beach relatives from Ocala, grabbed garlic rolls out of the pack, broke them apart and handed them to Norma Lewis, 81, of Deerfield Beach, who buttered them. And then Marie Salanitri, 78, of Hillsboro Beach, took it from there, putting the rolls on the grill.

“When [church leaders] were asking, I said, ‘Yes, I want to do this,’” said Lewis, retired from banking. “I like people.”

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