

A Night of Celebration

Extracted from NOTES From The Soup Kitchen /
Spring, 1997

"Our mission is to provide a nutritious daily meal to the hungry of the area, as well as to provide a safe and sheltered place for social gathering."

Over 800 caring citizens and community leaders joined in honoring the Soup Kitchen and Salvation Army at "A Night of Celebration" on Thursday, November 7 at the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center. It was an evening of recognition, motivation... and a few surprises.

The recognition was directed at the tireless efforts of our volunteers who render their service so unselfishly. Special recognition was also given to our donors. Their generous gifts of food and money are the "bricks and mortar" that keep the Soup Kitchen operating.

Muhammad Ali and his wife Lonnie were the guests of honor. In her keynote remarks, Mrs. Ali provided plenty of motivation by focusing on hunger's devastating effects among children, "Of everyone who is hungry in America, children are the most vulnerable," she said.

She went on to comment that the Soup Kitchen became one of Ali's favorite charities "because to feed someone hungry was a greater need than any need at our house.

Arnie Weaver, president of Pinnacle Bank and co-chairman of the Salvation Army's capital campaign, supplied one of the evening's surprises

by announcing that over \$1 million dollars had already been raised towards the campaign's goal of \$1.7 million.

But perhaps the biggest surprise of the evening came during Mrs. Ali's remarks when she introduced Yank Barry, a representative of Canadian-based manufacturer Vita-Pro, which manufactures a vegetarian product, pledged enough food to provide 25,000 meals for the Soup Kitchen in 1997. That's over 30% of the meals the Soup Kitchen will serve this year.

Other highlights included a video to announce the capital campaign and the introduction of Muhammad Ali as honorary chairman for the campaign.

The Salvation Army plans to purchase the former Y.M.C.A. building in Benton Harbor to gain more space for the services they offer and to provide a larger and renovated facility for the Soup Kitchen.

What you do with enough food for 25,000 meals? Learn how to prepare it - quickly. Elaine Holmes from Pioneer Memorial has volunteered and demonstrated to Alan Lee and Ruth Ball how to prepare the Vita-Pro Product. At this time, four (4) serving groups have decided to make use of this generous donation.