

Group preserves Lord's harvest for needy

BY SHARON DARGAY
STAFF WRITER

For a few hours last Wednesday, Jamey Lykins shared a common purpose with Jackson prison inmates.

Manual labor fueled their visions and nourished their souls.

And tomatoes — 2,000 cans of them — were the threads that bound them together.

"It's our belief that the Lord organized this church not only for spiritual matters but temporal matters," Lykins explained.

That's why the Rochester Hills man and fellow members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Rochester ward, sorted, cleaned, peeled, canned and labeled tomatoes grown by prisoners in Jackson and Adrian correctional institutions.

The produce is headed for food banks that feed the needy throughout the state.

Mormon church members in southeastern Michigan have preserved about 40,000 cans of whole tomatoes since prisoners began harvesting their gardens in late summer.

The 4-year-old tomato project is just one of several humanitarian efforts at the church's cannery and food storehouse in



Happy to help: Graciela Hansen of Rochester Hills grins her way through labeling the cans of tomatoes that volunteers from the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Rochester ward, sorted, cleaned, peeled and canned.

Farmington Hills.
Volunteers will start canning peach jam this week and will tackle pasta sauce, apple sauce and tomato soup production later this year.

Most of the produce will benefit food banks and other charity projects in Michigan. Some, including peaches grown in church orchards, will stock pantry shelves in Mormon stor-

houses nationwide. The church maintains its own welfare system by growing, canning and storing its own provisions for needy members.
"Each congregation worldwide

is assigned to a production project. It may be a cannery. It may be a plant that makes hand soap. It may be an orchard that grows peaches," explained Nils Johansson, cannery agent. "In our area we're assigned a cannery. It is up to us to keep it going and provide the labor. We request 40 volunteers for each shift from our church."

Volunteers enjoy it. Each ward volunteers two or three times a year. Guest volunteers from churches, civic groups, schools and businesses, pitch in, too.

"In this whole operation we have one paid employee. Everyone else is a volunteer. You have bank presidents working next to the janitor and enjoying it immensely," Johansson said.

Crews arrive by 6 p.m., review safety and sanitation rules and then suit up in apron, hair cap and gloves for five-hour stints in the production room. Trained volunteers mold newcomers and veterans alike into a team capable of producing 1,600-2,000 cans per night.

"Everything made here is tested by measurements that are stricter than the federal government's. No product will go out of here unless it meets standards," he noted. "We have not had a single accident here and you have many people who haven't even been here before."

The production room echoed with the sound of laughter and the din of clanking, rolling and gnashing machine parts during Lykins' shift.

Steam wafted from the assembly line in misty clouds and hovered over conveyor belts. Smashed tomatoes swam in puddles on the tile floor.

At one end of the line, volun-

teers fished the palm-sized fruit from a tub of water, separating "the bad from the good," explained Flint ward member Tammy Brown.

The good tomatoes rode a conveyor belt through an acid chemical bath that removes peels.

"We used to have to soak them and peel them off. We had twice as many people up here," said Claude Barker, bishop of the Grand Blanc ward, and one of several volunteers who stripped off peel remnants.

Canning heritage
Mary Ann Franson, a Clarkston ward member, scooped tomatoes through a hole and into cans.

She noted that canning is a part of Mormon heritage.

"What's really exciting is that families can come here to the cannery and do their own family canning. It's a wonderful opportunity for those who don't have the opportunity to can at home. And there are a lot of people who throw tomatoes on the floor without getting in trouble?"

Franson and her husband volunteer on a regular basis. She'll return to the cannery in a few weeks with her 17-year-old son.

"We feel that the way to find happiness is through service to others," she said. "It's a way to feel grateful for your blessings and it's a way to try to become more like the savior."

Dave Malone, a Rochester ward member, volunteers at the cannery as often as he can. Last week he tended the processing tanks.

"They always stick me with this because it's a little more complicated," he noted.

The cans cook in a scalding steam bath and then cool in cold water before they are labeled and boxed.

"The food here is good quality food," said Cathy Gorge, Rochester ward member. "It's good. It's like what you'd buy in a store."

She and her husband took turns working at the cannery and babysitting their preschoolers at home last week.

Gorge said the facility enables families serve and strengthen their religious beliefs together.

"If you want to judge a person on what they believe, watch what they do, she said. "With the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, it's easy to see what they believe because you can see their good works."



Spray: Chris Smith of Rochester sprays down the kitchen after canning.

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KATHRYN A. DORNAN
City Clerk

Publish: October 17, 1996

**CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR HEARING MEETING
OCTOBER 14, 1996**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Vagnozzi at 7:30 p.m.

Council Present: Barrett, Bates, Ellis, Oliverio, Sever, and Vagnozzi.

Council Absent: Grant.

Others Present: City Manager Hobbs, City Clerk Dornan, Assistant City Managers Brock and Call, Directors Bissell, Lesley, Potter, and Attorney Donohue.

COUNCIL TOOK THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

- Postponed consideration of request for variance for building located in a floodplain at 29535 Geraldine to October 21, 1996.
- Received report from Councilmember Bates re: attendance at National League of Cities Human Development Development Committee meeting.
- Received Attorney's report for month of October.

APPROVED:

- Various appointments to boards and commissions.
- Contract with Tom Dority & Associates consultant services to conduct organizational analysis of Department of Special Services.
- Master contract with S.M.A.R.T. for Municipal Credit/Community Credit Programs.
- Two year lease-to-own agreement with Baystate Financial for computers for Youth Program.
- Special event permit for St. Fabian School festival on October 20, 1996.
- City Council meeting minutes of September 16 and 30, 1996.
- Executive session to discuss City Attorney written opinion re: 29535 Geraldine.

AWARDED BIDS/PURCHASE ORDERS FOR:

- Demolition/removal of mobile home structure at 33610 Colfax to Blue Star, Inc. in the amount of \$3,450.00.
- Sand chutes for snow/ice control to Construction Materials, Inc. in the amount of \$31,250.00.
- Ice melting material to Lower Huron in the amount of \$7,538.00.
- Aerator to W.F. Miller in the amount of \$22,085; fairway mower to Spartan Distributors in the amount of \$10,954.00 for Department of Special Services.
- Communications equipment for Police Department to Mobile Communications Services, Inc. in the amount of \$4,848.00.
- Tablet printing to Quality Graphics in the amount of \$20,000.00.
- Subdivision tree planting program to Tom's Landscaping in the amount of \$11,205.00.

**MAYOR ALDO VAGNOZZI
KATHRYN A. DORNAN, City Clerk**

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