

- HOME
- Businesses
- Circulation
- eEdition
- Calendar
- Gallery
- Blogs

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Weather Forecast

December 12, 2009

Community NEWS

- Jobs
- Real Estate
- Cars
- Classifieds
- Obituaries

**Holiday Giving**

**News**

- Durham
- Orange
- Region
- Columnists
- State
- Nation/World

**Business**

- Local/State
- Nation/World

**Sports**

- Top Stories
- Duke
- NCCU
- UNC
- NCSU
- College
- High School
- Canes
- Durham Bulls
- Pro Sports
- Golf
- Tennis
- Auto Racing
- Soccer
- Columnists

**Lifestyles**

- Announcements
- Books
- Schools
- Health
- Food
- Faith
- Entertainment
- TV
- Columnists

**Opinion**

- HS Editorials
- HS Letters
- CHH Editorials
- CHH Letters
- Submit Letter

**Special Sections**

- Senior Times



## Lawyers fund new oven for charity

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BY DAWN BAUMGARTNER VAUGHAN

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DURHAM -- A law firm has replaced the oven at Urban Ministries of Durham Community Cafe, just in time for Christmas.

The two-level convection oven used to prepare large quantity meals -- UMD serves about 600 meals a day -- was broken. The upper portion of the oven had been broken for months, and around Thanksgiving, the lower portion broke, too. So the kitchen relied on one stove and a smaller, single oven. That meant less baked fresh food and more stews, casseroles and fried food for the homeless and others in need served by the downtown community organization.

Enter the trial attorneys and staff of Twigg, Beskind, Strickland & Rabenau P.A. The firm donated \$11,000 for a new commercial oven and new tables for the cafe, too.

A UMD board member is a lawyer and appealed to other lawyers for help. Don Strickland, an attorney of Twigg, Beskind, Strickland & Rabenau, said it only took about five minutes to come to a decision.

"We're fortunately in a position to help them," he said. "This is a time of great need," Strickland said, and the timing of the oven failure came at the worst time. Especially during the holiday season, this was a way for the firm to reach the most people, he said.

The oven should be delivered and installed on Monday, and the law firm will take it for a test drive Tuesday afternoon by baking cookies and other goodies for the UMD family holiday party and open houses later in the week.

Patrice Nelson, executive director of UMD, said there was no money in the budget for a new oven, and because the old oven was more than 20 years old, replacement parts were not available. The 16 new round tables will allow at least 150 people to dine together. The old tables were donated from the Northgate Mall food court 15 years ago, and weren't enough to seat everyone who came to eat. So people had to wait in line, Nelson said.

Not anymore. Diners will also be eating off new compartmental trays, courtesy of a donation from another law firm -- James Scott Farrin. The kitchen previously would run out of trays, causing another wait. Completing the new atmosphere at Community Cafe are new chairs and mugs, courtesy of advertising agency McKinney. The mugs will replace disposable cups.

In 2009, UMD provided about 18,000 meals per month.

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