

Clemson coaches' wives give back at Our Daily Rest

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SENECA — Residents at Our Daily Rest sit down for a hot meal every evening at the shelter, but on Nov. 14 they came home to a special treat.

The wives of several Clemson University football coaches brought bags upon bags of food from the Olive Garden.

"We thought we'd help by reaching out into the community," Nora Caldwell, wife of offensive line coach Robbie Caldwell, said. "We're serving lasagna, salad and bread, and we've got some different desserts."

The connector between the coaches' wives and the homeless shelter is Carla Boyd, mother of former Clemson quarterback Tajh Boyd.

"I've known these beautiful ladies from all of the years of Tajh playing at Clemson," Boyd said. "I keep in touch with them — it's like one big ol' family."

She works part-time at Our Daily Rest helping the residents who are transitioning into permanent housing. One day, she shared some of her stories with Kathleen Swinney, wife of Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney, and Kim Reed, wife of defensive backs coach Mike Reed.

Impressed by the work happening at the shelter, the coaches' wives began thinking about how they could give back.

Our Daily Rest isn't the kind of shelter with a line of people standing outside the door every day, waiting for a place to lie their weary heads for the night. It's an emergency shelter with a transitional program, which Our Daily Rest executive director Lauren Richardson said sets it apart from other shelters, but also lends itself to misunderstanding.

"We have a program by which people who really want to be self-sufficient again have 60 to 90 days to find a job, save money, get connected to the services they need and get any debts paid off they need to pay off while they don't have any overhead," she said.

Since the shelter can only house about 35 adults, anyone interested in the program must submit an application and undergo an admission process.



From left, Clemson football coaches' wives Nora Caldwell and Julie Venable serve dinner to 25 residents at Our Daily Rest. Rex Brown

"We're going to have them fill out an application and take a drug test, (and) we also do a sex offender check and a criminal check," Richardson said. "We're not looking for traffic violations — we're looking for those things that wouldn't work well in a communal living situation where there are men, women and children."

Once all the checks are completed, the case manager interviews the applicant. Together they discuss whether or not the applicant and the shelter are a good fit.

Residents are fed dinner every evening, and the shelter relies primarily on donations from the community, so Richardson was pleased to have the coaches' wives treat the residents.

"We really appreciate their heart for service and them taking time out of their busy schedules to give back to the community through Our Daily Rest," she said.

The shelter's staff is grateful for every willing hand. Boyd said she loves helping the residents at Our Daily Rest.

"Sometimes they might need their spirits lifted, some confidence or a little push — like a mother's gentle prod," she said. "I'm just here to help motivate them and stay positive, to help them reach their goal of getting into permanent housing. Sometimes I'm referring them to resources, and sometimes I'm just listening because they need someone to talk to."