

Seyfert created the Our Father's Table program, serving weekly hot meals through the United Methodist Church of Palm Coast.

by: [Jonathan Simmons](#) News Editor

In the spring of 2017, there was a homeless camp across the street from the Palm Coast United Methodist Church, behind the county library branch on Belle Terre Parkway.

“Michele is a selfless individual who meets human suffering right here in Palm Coast with kindness and hope. She works tirelessly to assist people in need wherever she finds them. Her generous Christian spirit shines unfailingly upon everyone — donors and people she helps.”

— SUE BICKINGS

Michele Seyfert attended the church and headed its outreach committee, and was volunteering at The Sheltering Tree — the cold weather shelter operating in Bunnell — and at the Soul Cafe, also in Bunnell.

She realized that there were no ministries in Palm Coast that provided homeless people with hot, prepared meals.

Seyfert decided to change that, creating the Our Father's Table program at the Palm Coast United Methodist Church.

"There's not enough places for people to live affordably," she said. "As everything's going up — gas, food, especially housing — the need for food is increasing more and more."

Seyfert sees a lot of grandparents on fixed incomes who are caring for grandchildren.

"It just goes so far, and so we can supplement, at least, their food budget," she said.

The Our Father's Table program started with meals donated by restaurants and grocery stores, prepped by volunteers and served weekly at the Palm Coast United Methodist church. The first meal, served on a Saturday night, had 12 attendees.

It's since expanded to 115 meals served on Saturday nights, plus another 80 or so meals delivered during the week to homeless individuals or others who need the help.

"So many people have her phone number and they call her for whatever they need, and she helps."

— MARY McGOWAN, volunteer

"It might be an individual living in their car," Seyfert said. "Sometimes someone will come by for a bicycle" — Our Father's Table's storage facility is next to that of The Bike Men of Flagler County, a service that provides and repairs bicycles for people who need them for transportation — "and we will be able to find people that way, indirectly. It might be someone living in a tent a block away from where we're storing our food."

Seyfert coordinates food donations and volunteers, and, in a rotation with other volunteers, cooks meals on Saturday nights. A recent one featured turkey with mashed potatoes and green beans, salad, and desserts from Starbucks and Panera Bread.

"The volunteers, they really put their heart and soul into preparation," Seyfert said. "They want to serve something that's very nutritious and complete. Sometimes they'll say, 'They're eating better than my husband!'"

Mary McGowan handles the scheduling for food pickups, and does some cooking.

"We've learned to feed a whole lot of people," she said. "I see how [Seyfert] interacts with people, and she sets a very, very good example.

I've been in business management all my life, and I'm always looking for something to streamline ... and she's just so good with the people, and she's really taught me to be that way, too."



Michele Seyfert (kneeling) at Our Father's Table's storage facility with volunteers (from left) Marvin Ellison, Adrienne Ellison, Sandra Strickland, Gerald Strickland and Charlie Seyfert. Photo by Jonathan Simmons

"When I say my prayers at night I always thank God for her and her husband Chuck, because there's not a day that goes by that they are not there for somebody in need," McGowan added. "So many people have her phone number and they call her for whatever they need, and she helps. ... She and her husband both find jobs for people. They find bicycles for people to get around. They know a lot of people. She reaches out, hooks them up."

Adrienne Ellison met Seyfert through the church's outreach program, then volunteered to help at Our Father's Table.

"She would go into the actual camp, which was located not too far from the church, and she would bring not only food and sandwiches and meals, but she also assisted with problems," Ellison said. "She was taking them to a medical facility, she was helping to try to get housing for them, providing monetary needs for them, so she really went over and above."

"She exhibits all the true attributes of a good solid Christian individual ... who's dedicated to helping others," said Marvin Ellison, Adrienne Ellison's husband and a fellow Our Father's Table volunteer.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, Our Father's Table volunteers have been preparing more meals in their homes rather than at the church's kitchen, and Our Father's Table has switched to takeout rather than an in-person meal while increasing deliveries and the overall number of meals served, Seyfert said.

About 50 volunteers now contribute, including Bible study groups from other churches and a group from Grand Haven's women's club that comes every Saturday to package meals.

"It really is a community effort," Seyfert said. "A lot of people coming together from different agencies, different churches — coming together just to serve and make a difference in somebody's life."