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Knights are hearts of the community

■ Catholic men's organization thrives on Coast

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Artichokes on Tuesday, not pumpkins on Friday, start the Half Moon Bay Art and Pumpkin Festival for the Half Moon Bay Council 7534 of the Knights of Columbus at Our Lady of the Pillar Catholic Church.

For this Coastside branch of the roughly 125-year-old organization of Catholic men committed to helping their community, that's when trucks haul in 12 to 13 bins of whole artichokes.

Photo courtesy Brian McNamara

A small army of Knights of Columbus and families pull leaves off artichokes and cut hearts into bites to get ready for Pumpkin Festival.

On the Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings before the festival, the council's 110 men with wives and kids, gather at the "old hall" by the church to pull the leaves off each 'choke, cut the hearts into bite-sized pieces and cook them in olive oil with spices.

"It's like a production line," said 20-year Knight Brian McNamara of Half Moon Bay, adding that while the hearts cook, green beans in marinara sauce are also simmering in a nearby pan.

It's all sold from the Knights booth at Pumpkin Festival outside the I.D.E.S. Hall. The money goes to parish members and families in need, to support religious education for youth, scholarships for high school seniors, and more.

The Knights of Columbus organization goes back to 1882 and Father Michael McGivney, assistant pastor of St. Mary's Church in New Haven, Conn. McGivney, who is being considered by the Vatican for sainthood, joined other parishioners to charter the Knights as a fraternal and charitable benefit society.

It rendered aid and financial help to sick, needy and disabled parishioners, and promoted social and intellectual fellowship through educational, charitable, religious, social welfare, war relief and public works efforts.

The Knights partner with Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity, Food for Families, Coats for Kids and Project Medishare that helped get prosthetics to Haitian kids who lost limbs in the January 2010 earthquake, and more. It also has a life-insurance program.

Community and fun aren't overlooked, either. The local Knights council sells beer at Pacific Coast Dream Machines and has an annual St. Patrick's Day corned beef and cabbage dinner, along with selling artichoke hearts at Pumpkin Festival.

The council also maintains Catholic Youth Organization basketball, with roughly 300 grade- and middle-school local youth. And while the Knights are made up of Catholic men, this council works in tandem with WISHES, a women's organization within the parish, that also forms teams that participate in the Pumpkin Festival artichoke "production line."

"A lot of what we give goes to the parish itself," said McNamara.

The Knights meet for dinner at 7 p.m. with a meeting at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month in the "old hall." For information or to join, contact the council at hmbkc@yahoo.com.

See full Half Moon Bay Article:

http://www.hmbreview.com/community/knights-are-hearts-of-the-community/article_1cc41060-08ef-11e2-942b-001a4bcf887a.html