



Love Letters Food Box is a hot meal provider for patients and families currently at CHOC Hospital in Orange, CA.

What is the Love Letters Food Box?

Love Letters Food Box was formed as a result of my experience of serving a family at CHOC Hospital. Their son, Dillan Morris was in CHOC for approximately four months. Every night the entire family would come to the hospital. Dillan's Grandmother cooked a meal each day and brought it to the hospital for them to all eat together. They allowed me to supplement a few of the meals along the way to give Grandma a break. After a very short battle with cancer, Dillan passed but my heart would never be the same. I was overwhelmed with how many families were going through a similar circumstance and I wanted to continue to help others at the hospital. And so, I approached Dillan's nursing staff and asked if I could anonymously provide a meal to another family. They were happy to accommodate and selected a family. The first meal was delivered on February 2, 2016. The family was very receptive and so I asked to continue providing meals to additional families. The answer was an enthusiastic "Yes"! With permission and help from the Morris family and in honor of Dillan, the Love Letters Food Box organization was born.

How does the program work?

- Yves' Restaurant & Wine Bar in Anaheim Hills provides all meals-**no cost to the volunteer**
- Interested volunteer sends an email request to be added to the Love Letters Meal Train
- Volunteer receives & accepts an invitation from Love Letters Meal Train for CHOC Hospital
- Volunteer selects a delivery date from the Meal Train program
- Volunteer arrives at the restaurant at designated pickup time
- Restaurant has the box filled with meal, apple cider and letter to family
- Volunteer is given a special phone number for the hospital contact for that day
- Volunteer puts the box into their car and drives to CHOC
- Volunteer parks in valet parking and informs valet that they are there to drop a box of food
- Volunteer calls designated number (which they received at the restaurant) and notifies them of their arrival
- Volunteer carries the box into the CHOC hospital lobby and waits for contact to pick up
- Contact takes the box and delivers the box to designated family
- Volunteer continues on with their day or evening...but with a great deal of joy in their heart!
- A hurting family feels the love of Jesus!

What is the purpose of the program?

Often when families are living through a crisis, they feel alone. The purpose of the program is come along side people who are experiencing such heavy burdens to remind them that they are not forgotten. Food is a common thread to all humanity and the gift of a meal without any obligations softens the distance between strangers and brings unexpected encouragement.

How is this program different from any other?

Love Letters Food Box is different from any other program being offered at CHOC hospital because it is personal and yet still protects the privacy of families going through incredibly difficult circumstances. Volunteers will never deliver directly to the patients or their families.

Does the program interfere with other ongoing, established programs?

Other organization such as The Ronald McDonald House provide needs for families at their facilities outside the hospital but the programs do not conflict. Families staying at the Ronald McDonald House are placed there so that they do not have to travel so far to be with their sick child. Volunteers who help there bring a meal or cook at the house and spend time encouraging families or helping with other children. However, parents staying at the house may be at the hospital more than at the house and so it is not a conflict to have a meal provided to them in their child's room. In fact, it allows them the opportunity to share a meal with the child. Families are given a discount if they order food from the hospital but the cost is still \$5/person which can be an added expense these families do not need to be worried about. In addition to the Ronald McDonald House across from CHOC, they have also provided a nice family area on one of the floors. This area is a relaxing place for families and visitors to gather and eat a meal away from the patient but no food is provided or available for purchase in this area.

Hannah's Dinners is another organization that provides food to the entire oncology floor each Thursday night. Food is set up in an open area and families are free to come prepare a plate for anyone there. Since this program is in place and working very well, Love Letters Food Box will not deliver food to the oncology floor on Thursday nights. However, other floors do not have this program so delivery to other floors will continue.

How are meals organized?

CHOC Child Life Development staff members are in charge of selecting the families that will receive the meal for each day and on each participating floor. Contact between the Child Life staff member and the Love Letters liaison confirms the number of people to prepare for and any dietary needs that might be in place.

Love Letters began by first delivering meals exclusively to the Oncology floor but we have now added a delivery once a week to the 4th floor. We hope to continue to add additional meals so that eventually there will be one meal every day to each floor.

What is included in the box?

A meal for the specific number of family members requested, a bottle of apple cider, a letter explaining why they are receiving the meal. Boxes are provided through the restaurant and the hospital does dispose of them so that no storage or additional work is required of the hospital employees.

Do Volunteers get to meet the families?

We believe that families going through such difficult times do not need the extra burden of feeling obligated to meet someone providing them a meal. The true gift to them is making it a completely anonymous, unconditional gift.

What other areas would Love Letters be able to help the hospital with?

Although the hospital does its very best to meet the specific needs of each family, there are always areas where they can use extra help. Some of the specific needs they have mentioned are:

- Parking fees for families
- Gifts for ages 14-25
- Room decorations for bone marrow transplant patients who are unable to leave their room
- Movie & Electronic Game Donations (G, PG & PG-13 ONLY – Must be new)
- Book Donations - (Must be new)
- New blankets and quilts
- Late night snack baskets
- Mom Bags – For moms who are at the hospital 24/7 and need a little refresher
- Specials events – (e.g. PROM – June 25th)
- Staff Monthly Meals – a thank you meal to the staff on each floor
- Patient Visitor Support – support for patients when their families cannot be at the hospital
- Grieving Support

Love Letters Food Box Organizational Needs

In order to grow this program to provide one meal per day to each floor of the hospital, seven days a week, Love Letters will need the following:

- Program Coordinator serving as the liaison to CHOC, restaurants , vendors and volunteers
- Sponsored Meals
- Branding, Website, Social Media, Advertising
- Printing & folding of letters
- Vendor participation – donations of apple cider and child friendly dessert items
- Volunteers – 35+ volunteers per month/floor/ 12 months/year

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