

Dream Dinners Gives Back To Families In Need

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Dream Dinners staffers welcomes Burn Institute families to their holiday event.

By Gina Yarbrough

SAN DIEGO—Four local families, struggling to make ends meet due to burn injuries, received a special holiday gift, thanks to the generosity of Dream Dinners of San Diego and The Burn Institute.

Dream Dinners of San Diego, a six year-old meal assembly business that brings families together over home-cooked meals by providing easy, time-saving solutions that removes the planning, preparing and shopping from meal time, invited the families to its Tierrasanta location on Dec. 10 to assemble a month's worth of healthy meals to be frozen and cooked at a later date.

The holiday meal event was the concept of Lillian Sarangay and Lee Ann D'Artenay, owners of Dream Dinners of San Diego, who wanted to give back to families in need during the holiday season.

Select families receiving meals: The Sterling family, whose 8 year-old son is a burn victim; the Drake family, who is struggling financially due to medical costs to treat a recent burn injury to their infant son; the Sterling family, a military family who is struggling to make ends meet. Their oldest son is a burn survivor and also diagnosed with Autism; the Briggs family, whose youngest son is a burn survivor, and attends burn survivor support programs such as Camp Beyond the Scars, and the Prado family, who were displaced after a fire destroyed their home. Ismael Prado suffered burn injuries as a result of the fire.

The selected families are involved with The Burn Institute, a nonprofit health agency that provides thousands of people each year with lifesaving fire and burn prevention education, funds vital burn research and treatment and conducts burn survivor support programs.

At the festive event, families gathered to watch Dream Dinners staffers as they chopped and diced the assembled meals, which included appetizers pulled pork meal and Greek chicken with lemon feta. After the demonstrations ended, the appetizers were served to guests.

“We served appetizer bites of the pulled pork meal, so the guests could see what the meal looks like cooked and actually taste it. Plus, we served another appetizer from next month’s menu, the Greek chicken with lemon feta, which the Burn Institute reps and families really loved,” Sarangay said.

Sarangay says Dream Dinners follows the American Heart Association guidelines, so all families are eating six-serving, healthy, delicious meals.

Dream Dinners staffers provided stations for families to prepare and assemble their own meals. The Sterling and Prado families, and representatives from the Burn Institute made all six-serving meals in less than two hours.

“Very surprised, couldn’t believe we were given this opportunity. Beyond happy and grateful,” said Ismael Prado, who has not been able to return to work due to his burn injuries. The generosity of the Dream Dinners and the Burn Institute made the holidays a little brighter for him and his family. “I did not know people out in the world cared until now. All of this work was very helpful to my family.”

“Everyone was snapping pictures; there was laughter and hugs going all around. The families were hugging our staff, and the Burn Institute reps were practically in tears as they thanked us for doing the event,” Sarangay said at the end of the event.

At the end of the event, Dream Dinners staffers and Burn Institute reps packed up the families’ meals and rolled them out to their vehicles and placed them in the trunks.

“We selected three of our four families this year as one of their family member sustained a significant burn injury this year....and it is often times this first year that is so very hard on a

family,” said Dana Kuhn, a representative of the Burn Institute in San Diego. “Four our fourth family, we selected them as they have been in our services for several years now. However this year they were generous enough to open their heart and homes to a young adult burn survivor who risked everything to move from New York to San Diego.”

Sarangay says Dream Dinners home office approached different franchisees around the country to participate in a charitable event around their region, and since during the holiday season is when most people give back, they agreed to participate.

“The PR firm offered three different charitable organizations that could benefit and I decided on the Burn Institute. I think they were so happy we chose them as our benefactor that communications between the PR firm, the Burn Institute and Dream Dinners started flowing immediately,” Sarangay said. “Our Home Office suggested the meals for the assembling. We received each family’s selections from the PR rep, ensured all the food was available, and that each station was ready to go for the night.”

“As a Burn Institute representative, I was so grateful to have been part of the process and witness all the excitement around preparing the meals. It really became a fun social hour (or two) for our families. A lot of smile a lot of giggles and a lot of laughing....and for us that is a natural setting of support. At the end of the night when we packed up and loaded the dinners it was amazing to reflect on what Dream Dinners have offered our families and on my ride home it made me think of so many other families who would greatly appreciate the opportunity.”