

Is There a Free Lunch at Rendezvous Pointe?

By Paul Jensen, Executive Director

September 26, 2019

Only once a month for the Birthday Lunch complements of the Bank of Sublette County. Yet for the other days of the month year-in and year-out, Rendezvous Pointe provides a very deep subsidy for every item available during the noon meal. Every few years, during my fourteen years as Executive Director, I remind seniors how much we pay for their benefit, but many still take their noon lunch for granted or those, who only come for cards or other activities, believe that the ice cream is free.

I will try now to set the record straight in hopes that each senior will recognize and appreciate our deep subsidies, and, in turn, make every effort to support Friends of Rendezvous Pointe beyond those very generous seniors and foundations. I will also propose some additional solutions.

Together with your \$5 donation is a federal and state contribution for those who have completed a current AGNES (that total is \$2.97 - the federal share is \$2.78 and the state share is 19 cents). In other words, the \$2.97 and the \$5 donation equal the revenue per senior meal of \$7.97, which is why we ask \$8 for non-senior meals. Our annual application for C1 of the Older Americans Act (the noon meal) includes the federal and state contribution. It is estimated that we will serve 10,130 meals in 2019. That will generate \$80,736 in senior income. Without the federal and state contribution, the income would drop to \$50,650.

The actual cost of the noon meal (groceries and labor) on average is \$12.14. Multiplying \$12.14 times 10,130 yields \$123,000. The difference between these two revenue figures (\$123,000 - \$80,736) is **\$42,264**, and is the amount that Rendezvous Pointe subsidizes for the noon meal.

As neither the federal nor state government provide any support for the salad bar or the specialty salads, Rendezvous Pointe then contributes another **\$10,000**. This is clearly not included in the \$5 donation, nor is the ice cream.

For 2019, the total subsidy paid by Rendezvous Pointe for the noon meal, the salad bar, and ice cream will be **\$54,000** or 35 percent of our annual allocation from the County, our largest contributor by far. The details of the ice cream are just below.

The labor cost to make the ice cream and clean the machine is \$120 a month. The ingredients cost another \$30 a month. It also costs \$700 to repair the machine. During the seven months of operation, including one repair, it costs Rendezvous Pointe **\$1,750**. During the past nine months the donations (50 cents per one average helping) totaled \$284.07 – a touch above the monthly cost of \$250.

The ice cream monthly donations ranged from a high of \$46.78 to a low of \$6.50. The average monthly donation was \$25.83. Since Rendezvous Pointe’s staff religiously make donations, it appears that many seniors are eating ice cream for free. This is not a sustainable situation, particularly when other businesses who offer soft ice cream charge \$2.00 for a small cone and \$3 for a large cone.

With respect to ice cream, and as in the past, we will serve ice cream until December 1, 2019. No ice cream will be served again until May 1, 2020. On May 1st, we will begin selling ice cream bars over the counter in the kitchen for 50 cents. For years, voluntary contributions have proven unworkable. From May 1st and beyond, the ice cream machine will, in effect, be in storage.

With respect to the salad bar, on October 1, 2019, we can cut back one day of the salad bar. We then will have the salad bar only on Monday, and Tuesday. Specialty salads will be served on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, on one of those days, we will serve a vegetable plate.

If you would rather have the salad bar three days week, you can “vote” to raise the noon meal price to \$6 from the current \$5. The \$6 meal price would be effective November 1, 2019. If you have eaten at OBOS or Heart and Soul, you will pay \$10 to \$12 for a sandwich, drink, and chips or French fries.

This essay will be in the October newsletter so seniors can vote to have the salad bar two days a week and still pay a \$5 donation or vote to have the salad bar three days a week and then pay a \$6 donation for the noon meal. A ballot to that effect will also be included in the newsletter. **However, if you choose to stay with the \$5 meal price, eventually and sometime in late 2020, we will have to increase the meal price.**

I don’t know how much support these steps will receive, but Rendezvous Pointe must take these actions that will ensure our financial health. It took me five years to achieve financial stability and pay staff enough so they could continue serving you. My goal is to provide high quality and nutritious meals and engaging activities at an affordable price, and, at the same time, guarantee our long-term financial success.

LUNCH OPTIONS BALLOT—PLEASE RETURN TO R.P. BY OCTOBER 10, 2019		
	YES	NO
OPTION 1: CUT BACK SALAD BAR TO MONDAY AND TUESDAY ONLY. LUNCH PRICE WOULD REMAIN \$5.00.		
OPTION 2: RAISE LUNCH PRICE TO \$6.00 AND KEEP SALAD BAR ON MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY.		