

# Local law enforcement serves homeless community for special lunch

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COLUMBIA, SC (WIS) - Local law enforcement officials spent their lunch break serving the community in a different way Tuesday.

"I saw one gentleman crying when he was getting his food. So, that really touched me. That was kind of tough to see him crying... and most people were happy and he was being comforted by other people, but that was touching," said Bryan Stirling, Director of the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

Stirling was one of many who spent his Tuesday afternoon serving the homeless a special holiday lunch at Christ Central Ministries in Columbia.

Numerous law enforcement agencies were present, including members of the Columbia Police Department and Richland County Sheriff's deputies. Staff from the Department of Corrections were also there to serve lunch and hand out essentials—including hygiene items, sleeping bags and blankets.

"It helped to pick up the people's hearts to know that someone cares. That really means something. Just to know that someone thought enough to fix up a table cloth and a good meal, and giving out gifts to walk away with. It really means a lot," said Franklin, who is homeless in Columbia.

Staff members at Christ Central Ministries say the show of support for this community is especially important during the holiday season.

"It's just good to see them smile, to see a smile on their face. A lot of them can't go home, so we welcome them and we make a homey atmosphere for them. We work with them all year," said Sylvia Mickens, Director of Christ Central Ministries. "This is what we do all year. So, at the end of the year, we just want to celebrate and remind them that we love them, no matter the circumstances."

Law enforcement officials and corrections department staff say it was a blessing to be able to give back. This was the first year the organization partnered with local law enforcement with the hope that it becomes an annual tradition.

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