

Rogersville, TN -

The annual People Loving People Thanksgiving Dinner in Rogersville has been cancelled this year due to the COVID pandemic. This will be the first time in seventeen years that the event has not taken place. Organizers are hoping for a return to the yearly event in 2022. “While hospitalization numbers are slowly trending down, the infection rate remains at 21% or higher. That number should be 5% or less and it is showing no sign of a rapid decline. The death rate, ICU and ventilator patient rates remain the same as well over the last few weeks. It is just not a safe environment right now to ask people to come and volunteer their time. Granted, by Thanksgiving Day, we may have an entirely different scenario than what we see today, but we have to give our food suppliers and our Sullivan County Disaster Relief Kitchen team sufficient notice to make plans. We have pushed our time constraints to the limit waiting for a decisive turn of events, but that has not occurred, so we must cancel the event for this year”.

Dr. Blaine Jones, the chairman of the event, made the announcement with much remorse. “This has been a significant part of my life and my family’s life over the last seventeen years. There are many families that will have a similar impact to their holiday traditions. There are so many people who have been a part of every PLP Thanksgiving Dinner – volunteering their time and efforts to feed those who will be without a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner. Not to speak of the thousands of meals we served to those who need it most. It is just a hard decision to make, but one that had to be made within a certain time frame, which was now”.

The dinner was already facing big changes as long time Chef, Russ Williamson, resigned his position at the end of the 2020 Thanksgiving Dinner. “We had interviewed a young lady who was very ambitious and looking forward to taking over the supervision of the kitchen for the event. We were thrilled the good Lord placed her in our vision. It just was not meant to be this year, but I am sure she will be just as thrilled to join us next year” said Mark DeWitte, longtime partner with Jones in planning the meal. “Mr. Jim Ramey and the Sullivan Baptist Kitchen crew were ready to provide their services, and we had the food order lined up, but we had a timeline we had to follow and make a decision. Unfortunately, we had to make that decision by this week and we decided to err on the side of caution and cancel this year’s event,” DeWitte went on to say.

Though organizers and volunteers will be disappointed in having to miss this year’s People Loving People Thanksgiving Dinner, they will be looking forward to resuming the event in 2022. “This does not mean that we are through doing the Thanksgiving meals, it just means we are taking a hiatus this year and hopefully by next year COVID will be an afterthought” Dr. Jones stated.

###