



Bill Troxel & Kristie Lee

AS A TEENAGER, BILL TROXEL would occasionally help customers pay off their grocery tab in the store where he worked. “I’d finish paying for their bill instead of making them put stuff back,” he recalls. “It’s just something I kind of get into.”

Troxel not only gets into it, he’s made giving a habit and something of an art form. Since those days working as a clerk and assistant manager in his hometown grocery store, Troxel has also given backpacks to area schoolchildren, helped fund scholarships and donated to FFA. He’s also given away gift cards via a local radio station, but with a twist: Those who won the cards had to, in turn, give them away to someone in need. And he spent some \$13,000 of his own money in 2010 to help give 200 families a Thanksgiving dinner.

“The need is always around us,” says Troxel, who’s farmed full-time since 1996 and now works about 3,000 acres on rented land as a custom operator. “But so many families have faced hardships in these tough times that we decided to provide a real dinner with turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, gravy, stuffing, rolls, butter and pumpkin pie.” And that was only a partial menu. Each dinner also included ham, carrots, stuffing, milk and more—enough to feed up to 15 people.

The original idea was to help 155 families, a figure that represents the average number of people each U.S. farmer is estimated to feed. So, Troxel and his girlfriend, Kristie Lee, reviewed nominations for and applications from those wanting to receive meals. The only information needed for the review was why a family or individual should

be a recipient. Some were awarded meals because they were single parents; one family had recently suffered through a fire; a few were senior citizens; and some were nominated for time they committed to helping others.

“It quickly became apparent,” Troxel says, “we couldn’t and didn’t want to stop at 155. We received help from other individuals and organizations, and ended up giving away 200 meals.”

There are many reasons he’s driven to do these kinds of good deeds, explains Troxel, who says he annually donates about 1% of his business’s total operating budget to charitable work. “The key thing is everybody needs a little help, and I guess my thought is to make the world a better place, you start in your own community. Eventually if you get enough people doing the right thing, it’ll kinda grow and get bigger, and more and more people will be helping more people.

“It’s about ... helping people and just working together, living together,” Troxel continues, “and getting along and not trying to be the richest guy in the cemetery.”

—Story by Richard Banks; photo by Harlen Persinger

