

Rick McNary - Numana

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

"Manna from heaven." That term comes from the Old Testament description of a time when the Israelites were lost and hungry in the wilderness, and bread miraculously appeared overnight. Today we'll learn about a modern day form of manna which also feeds the hungry. Sharing this food may derive from heavenly inspiration, but it comes by way of rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Rick McNary is CEO of Numana Inc., a non-profit, international hunger relief organization based in El Dorado, Kansas. For 20 years, Rick was the pastor of the Disciples of Christ Church in the rural community of Potwin, population 449 people. Now, that's rural.

In 2001, his church went on a mission trip to Nicaragua. While they were there, a little five-year-old girl climbed onto Rick's lap and said simply, "Please feed me. I'm starving."

"It touched me and changed my life," Rick said. He began studying how to deliver food to the needy internationally. After lots of research, a non-profit public charity was formed in August 2008. The mission statement was simple: To empower people to save the starving.

Based on the Old Testament story of manna from heaven, this new organization was named Numana. Rick McNary became CEO. But with all the start-up expenses, by August 2009 the organization was down to \$209.39 in its business account. Fortunately, a contact had been made with the Salvation Army which generated more support.

"They told us, 'If you feed schoolchildren, we'll get volunteers and money,'" Rick McNary said. Numana Inc. set out to organize a lot of volunteers in a special event to package the food supplies which the organization had acquired.

Based on the research, Numana Inc. had procured meal components consisting of rice, soy-protein, freeze-dried vegetables, and 21 vitamins and minerals targeted to help the immune system of malnourished people. But as a practical matter, how could these products get packaged and shipped at an affordable cost?

On December 29, 2009, Numana Inc. and the Salvation Army launched its first food packaging event in El Dorado. Churches, citizens, and other organizations were invited to participate and send volunteers.

"In two days, four thousand people showed up and helped us fill a forty foot trailer (with meals)," Rick said. The ingredients were measured into bags, sealed, boxed, and prepared for shipment to Haiti.

The trailer was being driven to a ship at a port in Virginia when a snowstorm hit and the food had to be put into storage. But then came another event: On January 12, 2010, a catastrophic earthquake hit the island of Haiti.

"Two hours later, the Salvation Army director called and said, 'I need that food. Can I get it right now?'" Rick said. "We airlifted that first load into Haiti."

The need was immense. Three million people were affected by the earthquake. Numana Inc. organized another food packaging event, and the concept took off. Subsequent food packaging events have been held from San Francisco to Philadelphia. Volunteers are asked to donate non-perishable items for local food banks also.

In its first full year of operation, Numana Inc. involved 125,000 volunteers and produced 21 million meals. Wow.

The cost of each of these meals is only 30 cents. The meal comes in a plastic pouch which has printed on it: "Not to be sold. This food is to be given freely because Jesus loves little children." Through the Salvation Army World Service Office, these meals are distributed to school feeding programs in nine countries of the most impoverished areas of the world.

In Kansas, the City of El Dorado sold Numana Inc. two buildings for one dollar. Those buildings house Numana's operations. Numana is now working on a locally grown, healthy foods project in El Dorado, plus much more. For more information, go to www.numanainc.com.

In February 2012 at Washington DC, the Alliance to End Hunger presented its Innovation Award for Hunger-Free Communities to Numana Inc. and Rick McNary.

"Manna from heaven." That's a historic phrase from the Bible, and now Numana is making history. We commend Rick McNary and all those involved with Numana Inc. for making a difference by serving and saving the starving.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.