



Foodservice Company Brings Hope and Hot Meals to Tornado Victims

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When companies Sterno and Candle Lamp merged nine months ago, they created a business of portable heat and light for the foodservice professional. But after the Moore, Oklahoma, tornado, they created something more: They created hope.



ACF Chef Charles Duit and SternoCandleLamp's Executive Chef Thaddaeus Smith prepare breakfast in Moore, OK following the tornado.

Thaddaeus Smith, SternoCandleLamp's executive chef and communications manager, was used to working in traditional channels of work, but not in community aid.

"There is not a long history of doing this with our company," Smith says. But when Smith was at the National Restaurant Association in May, he heard about a post from the American Culinary Federation (ACF) requesting help in Oklahoma following the F-5 tornado.

The vice president of marketing, Mike Parcharis felt there was a way for SternoCandleLamp to help.

"It seemed like a good place to take our product and help," Smith says. It took two weeks for the company to get set up because of the extent of destruction.

"It was total devastation, it was unbelievable. I'd never seen anything like it," Smith says. The company sent several pallets of fuel and chafing dishes to Oklahoma.

"The idea was to set up a feeding center for a long-term feeding solution for those who lost their homes and for the emergency crews," Smith says.

The company's products allowed for a buffet-style food center, which was set up at Moore's Southgate Baptist Church. Emergency chefs from Mercy Chefs and ACF were able to strategically plan for meals, knowing the warming dishes would keep food hotter longer. Buffet-style also funneled larger crowds through the center faster, and Smith estimates that they served 40,000. Buffet-style serving also cuts waste by allowing consumers to decide their portion size.

"It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day of selling of our product to foodservice," Smith says. "It was nice to see the product used to help

people.”

The U.S. weather service estimates 1,300 tornadoes hit the U.S. every year. In 2013, 628 tornadoes have been reported, and 488 confirmed.

“Whenever we’re needed like that again, we’d certainly be there,” Smith says.

By Kirsten Ballard

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