

Dream Dinners Essay by Catherine Shupe

Dream Dinners has been a tremendous blessing for our family. Let me begin by introducing ourselves to you and telling you our story. My husband and I have a thirteen year old son whom we home school. We are all born again spirit filled Christians whom love the Lord very much. We have been very active in our church. We love doing fun activities. I love to do gardening, take care of my family, and I love to cook, especially high quality, healthy food. We hardly ate out since my family always loves my cooking better than the restaurants.

All of this changed on November 1, 2005. We were on our way home from church when we were involved in a serious automobile accident caused by a drunken driver. As a result of the accident our van was totaled, my husband had two broken ribs, our son had a sore chest and I was hospitalized with multiple injuries. One of the injuries I sustained was that I temporarily lost the use of my legs and muscles throughout my body. I had to learn how to walk all over again and I had to regain strength throughout my body. Even a can of vegetables was too heavy to pick up. I also was unable to take care of myself, our home and my family. I had to rely on other people for that. My husband has been a tremendous blessing in that area; he has given so much of his time. He has had to do most of the cooking, laundry, cleaning, and taking care of me and making sure I got to my doctor visits and physical therapy appointments, as well as doing his regular full time job. God has continually given him strength throughout. My husband has had to learn how to cook throughout this experience because eating out is not healthy and can be quite expensive.

One day after a doctor's appointment this past summer in July we drove through a strip mall in West Chester, Ohio, where we saw a store front with the name on it called "Dream Dinners." On the door it had a web site written on it. When we got home I looked up the web site because the name sounded very intriguing. Anything with cooking is always exciting. When I went to the web site it sounded like an answer and a gift from God for meals for us. A way to have healthy, gourmet meals the way I would cook if I could. And it had variety which is a must in our family. We were not real sure if the meals would taste "home cooked" or even good at all. The concept sounded great though. They had an introductory offer of three meals for \$49.00. We thought we would try it and see. However we did not know if they could accommodate me since I was on a walker and I need a stool to sit on since I could not stand for long periods of time and I needed my husband to help me. I emailed Julie and Dusena and asked the above questions, and to my surprise they were more than accommodating! Since their computer was down, Julie went the extra mile and emailed me from her home email to ensure I go the answers in adequate time and then when their work computer was up, she emailed me again. When my husband and I arrived at Dream Dinners in August both Julie and Dusena and the staff were ready for us, complete with a wonderful stool! Both of these ladies are wonderful! They truly make the atmosphere at Dream Dinners a wonderful place to be. They are more than helpful and so sweet. The meals have allowed us to eat not only healthy but also gourmet which we like a lot. The quality of the food is wonderful and the taste is great also. Since we do not eat pork or shell fish I asked Julie and Dusena if I could substitute another meat or bring my own in sometimes and again they were more than accommodating. When I came in September, Julie went

the extra mile again and had her husband bring some ground beef from their home freezer for me to substitute for an entree. Dusena has always been available to answer questions for us and even went the extra mile in September to physically help me walk to my car. I had some trouble getting off the curb and Dusena and my girlfriend were there to help me. Dusena's husband was there and went the extra mile and helped my husband put the meals in our car. I have come to Dream Dinners every month since August and have not regretted it. I have told several other ladies about it also. The last two times I have attended Dream Dinners a girlfriend has come with me and helped me prepare the meals. Although, she has to do about 90 percent of the preparations for me and I get to do about 10 percent of the preparations, it helps me feel like a wife and a mom again. It has helped me to feel normal again, like I am fixing meals for my family. I also get to decide what side dishes for my husband to fix with the entrees. I truly have a part again in the meal fixing and planning again. Thanks! When we get home my husband puts the entrees in the freezer and takes three out on Sundays to have for that week. Since we get the large servings, each dinner actually gives us two meals and sometimes more depending on the entrée. As a result, we end up with meals for a month; it is such a time saver and a fabulous blessing for us to have great tasting high quality food. It is so exciting to see my husband's face when he serves these wonderful meals to us! It makes me really happy to know that I had a part in it also!

I always look forward to the next month's menu coming out. At the first of the month I look to see what is on the menu for the following month and then I start deciding what we will have and when I can go into Dream Dinners to fix the entrees. Each month is new and it is so exciting! I really appreciate the fact that you are having Thanksgiving side dishes and a turkey rub as a choice in November; that would be way too much for my husband to fix for us that day. But thanks to Dream Dinners, Thanksgiving will be so much easier to fix and we will have a wonderful Thanksgiving meal. And again I will have a part in preparing it. Thanks!

Dream Dinners has not only been a blessing to my family by helping me to feel like a wife and mom again, and allowing my husband to fix wonderful meals for us, but it has been an outlet for me as well. This past year I have not been able to get out and do a lot of things besides doctor visits and physical therapy appointments and maybe the grocery store once in a while. I was unable to do fun things due to my physical state, but Dream Dinners has changed that. In August, when my husband and I went to Dream Dinners for the first time we thought of it as a date! It was the first time the two of us were out without our son since the accident. It was so nice to be together doing something fun. At the September and October session a girlfriend who is moving to Phoenix, Arizona in November, was able to come with me and spend some fun time together. After the October session my husband and I will be taking the entrees to a friend whom just had surgery and is unable to cook. I am so excited to be able to do Dream Dinners because if it weren't for Dream Dinners I could not bless this friend and her family with meals. Not only is it blessing me and my family but others also.

We serve a healing God and I believe that soon I will be 100% healed, off the walker, with my strength back, taking care of myself, and taking care of our home, as well as my wonderful family, and cooking for my family. I am so much better than I was a year ago. My strength is coming back and I am walking better, the other injuries are

healing also. I so look forward to that day of being back to myself 100%; and I know that I will still continue to come to Dream Dinners regularly; it is truly worth the 35 minute drive one way. Thank you for taking your precious time and reading my letter on how Dream Dinners has blessed me and changed our life. Both Julie and Dusena have truly gone the extra mile to make me feel so loved and welcomed and to accommodate me. They are wonderful! What a difference Dream Dinners has made in my life. May you and your families have a glorious day in Jesus!