

# Chick-fil-A Employees Trudge Through Snowstorm to Feed Stranded Motorists

A snowstorm in the South is about as rare as a glass of unsweetened tea at a church supper. Folks around Birmingham, Ala., weren't all that worried though. The storm was only supposed to dust the city—not even enough powder for a Southern snowman.

So when the first snowflakes began to fall, no one paid all that much attention. But then, the flakes kept falling. Before too long folks in places like Hoover and Inverness realized it was much more than a dusting. By that point, it was too late for anyone to do anything.

Icy interstates and highways soon became clogged with cars and trucks. Thousands of motorists soon found themselves stranded with nowhere to go—including many stuck on Highway 280.

But a good number of those stranded motorists were able to find shelter in the storm thanks to the kindness and generosity of Chick-fil-A restaurant employees and the restaurant's owner, Mark Meadows.

Once the snow started accumulating, Meadows closed the restaurant and sent his staff home. But a few hours later, many of them returned—unable to get to their homes.

“Our store is about a mile and a half from the interstate and it took me two hours to get there,” manager Audrey Pitt told me. “It was a parking lot as far as I could see.”

So Pitt left her car on the side of the interstate and joined a flock of bundled up drivers trudging through the snow.

“At one point there were more people walking than driving,”

she said.

Some of the drivers had been stuck in their cars for nearly seven hours without any food or water. So the staff of the Chick-fil-A decided to lend a helping hand.

“We cooked several hundred sandwiches and stood out on both sides of 280 and handed out the sandwiches to anyone we could get to—as long as we had food to give out.”

The staffers braved the falling snow and ice, slipping and sliding, as they offered hot juicy chicken breasts tucked between two buttered buns. And Chick-fil-A refused to take a single penny for their sandwiches.

The meal was a gift—no strings attached.

For the frozen drivers, it was manna from heaven.

“They were very excited and extremely thankful,” she said. “People were thankful to get something to put in their stomachs.”

Pitt said they were especially surprised that the sandwiches were free. Why not make some extra money during the storm? It’s not like anyone could go to another restaurant. Chick-fil-A had a captive crowd of hungry customers. So why did they give away their food?

“This company is based on taking care of people and loving people before you’re worried about money or profit,” Pitt told me. “We were just trying to follow the model that we’ve all worked under for so long and the model that we’ve come to love. There was really nothing else we could have done but try to help people any way we could.”

Lauren Dango was one of those stranded motorists. She’s known Meadows for years and she was stunned when she saw him walking from car to car with Chick-fil-A sandwiches.

"I looked up and I'm like, what is he doing," Dango told me. "He had a catering order and it got canceled, so he pulled over and started giving away food."

And if that wasn't enough, Meadows helped a driver maneuver along the icy road by pushing a car up an incline.

Dango was so touched by Meadows' kindness, she sent a letter to Chick-fil-A's corporate headquarters.

"Kudos to Mark Meadows for not only preaching the 'second mile' concept, but actually living by it," she wrote.

It's no secret that Chick-fil-A was founded by a Christian family. And it's no secret that they run their business on biblical values. What happened in Birmingham is an example of how those biblical values are played out.

"We just wanted to be able to help," Pitt said. "Yesterday was such a hopeless situation. We wanted to do something to make people feel a little bit better. We were here. We had food and there were people outside who needed food. So it just made sense to do something for them."

But Chick-fil-A's generosity didn't stop there.

"We opened up our dining room to anyone who wanted to sleep on a bench or a booth," Pitt told me.

And this morning, the weary staff members fired up their ovens and began preparing chicken biscuits. The only thing that is closed is Chick-fil-A's cash register.

"We're not open for business," she said. "We're just feeding people who are hungry."

I'd say the Chick-fil-A team blessed a lot of people in Birmingham—but that's not how Pitt sees it.

"It's a blessing to us to be able to help people," she said.

“It really is.”

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,” Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew. “I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.”

It was a Sunday school lesson illustrated on a snowy winter day along Highway 280 in Alabama with a chicken sandwich and a side of waffle fries.

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