Roger York, Central Kitchen Manager, and Robin Lawless, Assistant Manager, arrive at LCADD’s Central Kitchen each day at 4:00 a.m. to begin the task of preparing and then distributing hundreds of meals to senior center facilities located throughout the Lake Cumberland region.

The Central Kitchen is managed by LCADD’s Senior Services Department, which is headed by Director Jeric DeVore.

“Our state-of-the-art commercial kitchen, which is centrally-located in Russell County, prepares nutritious meals daily for 10 senior centers in Adair, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Green, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, Taylor and Wayne counties,” said DeVore.

“Roger and Robin and the rest of the Central Kitchen staff prepare and distribute anywhere from 15,000 to 16,000 meals per month,” he said.

Upon arrival, York and Lawless immediately begin cooking the daily meal and preparing any cold menu items. Tina Perkins, Central Kitchen Aide, arrives at 6:00, and by 7:00, van drivers Leon Davis, Paula Brown, and Steve Tribble, have arrived to begin the process of transporting food to nine of the 10 counties. The drivers begin by stock- ing their vans with paper products and any other supplies that the centers might need that day. Very soon thereafter, the freshly-prepared food is “trayed up,” or ladled into bulk steam table pans and then placed in specially-insulated containers that ensure proper food temperatures during transport.

The drivers handling the route in the Eastern time zone – which includes Casey, McCreary, Pulaski, Taylor and Wayne counties -- are the first to load their vans and leave with the prepared foods.

A little later, the drivers covering the route in the Central time zone head to Adair, Clinton, Cumberland and Green counties with their food and supplies. The Russell County Senior Center is located adjacent to the Central Kitchen so it needs no special transportation.

Upon arrival at the senior centers, drivers unload their vans, and then center employees transfer the food to steam tables in their warming kitchens. Seniors visiting the centers each day are the primary recipients of the meals. However, a number of meals are packaged individually at each center and then special delivered to the homes of senior clients who are unable to make the trip to the center.
While the drivers are out on the road, those employees remaining in the Central Kitchen begin the clean-up process. Everything in the kitchen must be thoroughly sanitized each day, and when the drivers return, their steam table pans must be rewashed and sterilized.

In addition to food preparation, York uses a dietitian-approved program to carefully plan menus that offer seniors nutritious meals that also satisfy their tastes.

York said at the present time they have both winter and summer menus. Each of these offers a six-week rotation. Special items are added to the menu from time to time to offer more variety.

DeVore said the mission of the Senior Services Department, which encompasses the Central Kitchen and 10 senior centers, is to provide and coordinate responsive programs and services, which enhance the dignity, support independence, and offer stimulating and meaningful opportunities for adults 60 years of age and older.

The Senior Services Department is managed by the Lake Cumberland Area Agency on Aging & Independent Living (LCAAIL) and receives funding through the Kentucky Department of Aging and Independent Living, local donations and fundraising efforts.

The Russell County Senior Center and Central Kitchen is a 6,500-square-foot facility that was completed in February 2007 at a total cost of $1,000,000.