

## **Senators visit Bean's Cafe**

**by Linda Langston**

Executive Director, Bean's Cafe

Bean's Cafe was grinning from ear to ear recently when some of our quieter supporters stopped by for lunch:

- Sen. Don Bennett of Fairbanks
- Sen. John Binkley of Bethel
- Sen. Jim Duncan of Juneau
- Sen. Paul Fischer of Kenai
- Sen. Willie Hensley of Kotzebue
- Sen. Mike Szymanski of Anchorage
- Sen. Rick Uehling of Anchorage
- Sen. Fred Zharoff of Kodiak

On their lunch break from Senate Finance Committee hearings on the state budget, they stopped by to see how some of the dollars are spent from what the senators call the Anchorage Social Services Block Grant.

More than 40 nonprofit social service agencies share the \$3 million in that block grant each year.

This year, however, that block grant is threatened with a 50 percent cut. And for Bean's Cafe and every other agency funded by the block grant, that cut would be devastating.

Bean's Cafe is, of course, what Anchorage has instead of a soup kitchen. Every day more than 500 meals are served to those who have come to be known as the street people of Anchorage.

Now, not one of these folks started out on the street. Few started in Anchorage. In fact, they come from every city, every town and almost every village in the state.

It's the Anchorage-as-service-center concept — in this case, social service center. And the senators understood that on that Saturday as they looked across the crowded dining room and recognized faces from every district.

It's the Alaska Legislature at its best, each tending after each district and constituent, no matter where they're found. Sometimes we wonder, working down at Bean's, whether the family and friends the street people left back home ever think of them again. The senators' presence at lunch that Saturday — and quiet support in the Capitol every year — assure us all that they haven't been forgotten.

So follow the senators' lead and stop by when you're in Anchorage to see for yourself. We're at Third and Karluk. We're open every day, whether you're a senator or a street person.