

MealTimes



Cover Story

Community and Nutritious Meals Go Hand-in-Hand



On a busy Wednesday afternoon, Garret can be found enjoying a meal with his friends at the Curry Senior Center.

The Center, located in the heart of the Tenderloin, is one of twelve Community Nutrition Program (CNP) sites Project Open Hand provides warm, nutritious meals to daily. In the past year alone, Project Open Hand served more than 335,000 meals at these sites.

Garret says that he is a regular at the CNP location for the community, as well as the nutritious meals: "I come to socialize. I enjoy meeting people, celebrating different holidays, cultures, and getting nutrition."

While Garret has been a client for years, he never thought he'd be able to live such a healthy and stable life. After living with an addiction to heroin, Garret has been sober and clean for 28 years.

Despite years of living with a substance use disorder, he says that he attempted to get clean a few different times. He entered a residential rehabilitation program, completed the program successfully, and was even hired to work with them after treatment. However, he experienced a relapse not long after, and it would be another decade until he recovered.

It wasn't until Garret was 46 years old that he "could not see himself lasting much

longer." Garret took in his surroundings and thought to himself: "Drug addicts do not last long on the streets. I'll either be in and out of prison like I have been - or dead."

Because of the support from his grandmother, who stood firm by Garret until her death, he was finally able to take control of his life again and stop using heroin. A few years later, Garret also was able to overcome a long-time cigarette addiction.

"I just try to do things the right way, live the right way, and it has paid off."

"I did something very few people can do. I am very proud of myself. I kicked a 28-year heroin addiction and a 34-year cigarette addiction." While he is proud of himself, he tries not to get too full of himself though, he says. "Many people have changed their lives for the better and not just me. Anything I have done, others have done."

These days, Garret spends his time working to become and stay a responsible older adult, though he doesn't worry too much about what others think of him.

"Now, not everyone has kicked a drug addiction, but I did, and I am proud of the way I have carried myself since then as a responsible, honest senior citizen. I just

try to do things the right way, live the right way, and it has paid off."

Garret reflects back on his grandmother, who always stood firm by him during his years of living with addiction, and he is proud of the life she led: "She endured so much to immigrate to the United States. She equally balanced the 'old world' of where she came from with the 'new world' of the United States. That wasn't easy to do in the 1920s."

His grandmother instilled in him not only the language and customs of his family, but sound advice that he still takes to heart today: "Concentrate on the people who like you," she would always say." He adds, "I have never thought about how I look to other people."

These days, Garret spends a lot of his time at Curry Senior Center where he participates in various programs, including Project Open Hand's breakfast and lunch services. He shares that he tries to stay healthy by eating our meals regularly and not consuming any added sugars in his diet.

He believes the meals are nutritionally sound and cover every important part of the food pyramid. He enjoys

many of our meals, but he especially likes the ones that include chicken thighs or breasts, stews, or fish.

At the Community Nutrition Site, over meals and through activities, Garret has found peers and made new friends, which he says is incredibly important to him. The communal setting and the nutritious food help him stay a responsible, honest community member.

He shares: "Project Open Hand has been feeding people every day for nearly 40 years and I'm happy there are places like this to go to when I need it. Places like this help me."

Real life stories of recovery and redemption just like Garret's can be heard over a nutritious meal at any of our Community Nutrition Program's meal sites located throughout San Francisco. Come to eat and connect; leave nourished and celebrated.

To find out the nearest CNP site or to help support more clients like Garret, go to www.openhand.org

by Erika Wong, Associate Director, Community Nutrition Program



Paul's Letter

Providing Nutrition to Those Who Need It Most

Dear Friend,

June is always special for Project Open Hand, as it encompasses two issues near and dear to our mission: National Hunger Awareness Month and Pride Month.

Since 1985, Project Open Hand has served nutritious *meals with love*. While we started with only serving people living with HIV/AIDS, we've expanded our services to those living with critical illnesses. Everything we do is geared towards supporting the needs of your neighbors, your community, and serving those who need it most.

For example, in 1998, we began serving warm, nutritious meals at locations throughout the city through our Community Nutrition Program (CNP). It's a place where clients like Garret find nutrition, community, and support. Garret, who has rebuilt his life after facing an addiction, relies on these services to

stay healthy.

That was exactly the hope our founder, Ruth Brinker, had for us. In fact, on a visit to our first CNP location in '98, Ruth said: "It's always been my dream that one day Project Open Hand would be in the position to feed more people."

Today, you can see that in everything we do.

Time and time again I hear stories from clients about how our services impacted - and continue to impact - their lives. Just a few weeks ago at one of our fundraising events a former client came up to me and shared how our services 'saved his life, and the lives of his friends' who are living with HIV. He now regularly volunteers at our San Francisco location to give back.

With our roots in serving those most impacted during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we are honored to continue to support and be supported by the Bay Area's LGBTQ community. For more than 35

years, Project Open Hand has marched in the San Francisco Pride Parade alongside volunteers, team members, and supporters of our work. And we're looking forward to another year marching in our contingent and celebrating San Francisco Pride.

Because of you, Project Open Hand will always provide nutrition to those who need it most, and we will continue to support our LGBTQ community. Thank you for continuing to make that possible - and happy Pride!

Paul Hepfer,
Chief Executive Officer

P.S. To find out more about events and ways to support your neighbors in need, right here in your community, go to www.openhand.org



Upcoming Events

Learn more about each of these events on our website at www.openhand.org/events



June 28 - June 30: San Francisco Pride Weekend

Join us for the 54th Annual San Francisco Pride Parade and Festival! Stop by Project Open Hand's booth during the Trans March Resource Fair on Friday, June 28, or join us as we boogie down Market Street for the Pride Parade on Sunday, June 30.



July 14: The Richmond/Ermet Aid Foundation's 30th Anniversary (REAF)

Get ready for "Help is on the Way XXX: Broadway & Beyond," one of San Francisco's longest-running benefit concerts. This iconic event, presented by the Richmond/Ermet Aid Foundation, will benefit Project Open Hand and REAF's Small Emergency Grants Program.



September 26: Save the Date for Dining Out For Life!

Dining Out For Life East Bay will return on Thursday, September 26! Dine out at participating restaurants on this special day and a portion of your bill will go towards providing nutritious meals with love for Project Open Hand clients.



A Look at Pride Parades Past

For over 35 years, Project Open Hand has marched in the San Francisco Pride Parade. Check out photos from some of our contingents from past celebrations!



1992



1998



2019



2017

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Project Open Hand

Project Open Hand's mission is to improve health outcomes and quality of life by providing nutritious meals to the sick and vulnerable, caring for and educating our community.

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FOOD = LOVE



Community

Spotlight: Herb Gardening Classes Bring New Flavors to Client Kitchens

In MealTimes 131, the Project Open Hand nutrition team discussed the importance of seasonal produce in supporting our clients' nutritional needs. Now, our team has taken that a step further by providing clients with gardening classes that will help them to grow their own herbs.

Herbs provide an array of nutritional benefits. They are also a flavorful substitute to cut down on sodium in many recipes.

That's why, in early 2024, thanks to a recent micro-grant from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and discounted supplies, Project Open Hand hosted classes to teach clients to plant and grow their own herbs at home.

Over a period of three weeks, a group of clients in the Oakland office participated in weekly herb gardening classes, each focusing on a different topic: microgreens, herbs, and green onions.

In addition to learning how to grow and care for each plant,



clients also learned about the benefits of incorporating them into their diets. Those who were interested in continuing were able to take additional planting kits home with them.

While the grant only covered a few small courses, Project Open Hand was able to lead a second series of classes in our San Francisco location in April. The classes, identical to the first series in Oakland, were a hit.

"Clients really enjoyed the classes," said Senior Manager of Nutrition Services, Kristi Friesen. "One client even came up to me and said that she wished we could do them every week!"

"Since the classes, clients have been sharing their gardening progress with us - and some have even shared recipes of what they made after the class, like how they used the green onion," added Registered Dietitian Jenny Luong.

With the micro-grant from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics spent, there are no plans for future classes at the moment. However, with so many clients inspired to start or continue their gardening journey, the team has made classroom materials available to all clients.

by Kimberly Kollwitz,
Manager of Marketing and Communications



Project Open Hand Plate Clubs

Your gift makes a difference. MealTimes offers special acknowledgment to Project Open Hand supporters who have made gifts totaling \$1,000 or more from January 1, 2024 through March 30, 2024. If you have questions about this list, please contact donations@openhand.org or 415-447-2300.

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* Designates members of The Supper Club, Project Open Hand's monthly giving program.

To learn more about The Supper Club, visit: openhand.org/give/supper-club.



From Our Kitchen to Yours

Smoky Spinach and Corn

Ingredients

- Kernels from 3 corn cobs
- 2 onions, diced
- 8 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 inch piece ginger, grated
- 1 ¼ cups (10 oz.) Spinach
- 2 ¼ cups (18 oz.) vegetable stock
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Instructions

1. Fry sweetcorn on a dry skillet until browned (about 3 to 5 minutes). Remove from the skillet and set aside in a bowl. (This will be added back in later.)
2. Add the spices to the skillet and fry until fragrant (about 30 seconds). Once again, remove from the skillet and set aside in a bowl so it doesn't overcook.
3. In the same pan, fry onion, garlic, and ginger for 2 minutes until browned. Add the spinach, stock, cooked spices, and sweetcorn.
4. Simmer covered for 15 minutes, then uncovered for another 10 minutes until the spinach is soft and the liquid is reduced.

This side dish makes 8 servings. It goes well with grilled chicken or rice topped with yogurt!



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When you join The Supper Club, Project Open Hand's monthly giving community, you'll receive VIP perks to our signature events, special invitations to members-only activities, exclusive insider access, and more.

Your monthly gifts are convenient, safe, and secure, and help offset the increased costs that Project Open Hand is facing. Ensure that we can get nutritious meals into the hands of those who need it most by joining today.

To learn more, visit www.openhand.org/supperclub or scan the QR code



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