Michael B. loves the outdoors. When it’s a sunny day, he’ll be at the beach. If the weather is temperamental, he can find a little protection under the tall cypress trees that fill San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park.

On every one of his journeys, a four-legged friend is always by his side, and on this sunny Tuesday afternoon, he and his blind five-year-old terrier mix, Barney, head to Project Open Hand on Polk Street for weekly groceries.

The grocery center lights up with energy and joy as soon as he walks in with his dog. Clients and staff members want to pet Barney and feed him treats. “He is priceless. We were meant to be at this time in my life,” Michael said.

Life is certainly priceless to Michael, who credits Project Open Hand Nutrition Services as one of the reasons why he has lived as long as he has.

“From the many years I dealt with doctors, (I learned) if you eat fresh foods, you get the proper vitamins, and in some ways that’s better than pills. It’s one of the best medicines,” Michael said.

Michael was born in Placerville in 1959. After five years, he moved to Half Moon Bay with his family. When he got older, he moved to San Jose and stayed in the South Bay during the 1970s and 1980s.

He had a career in electronics as an assembler and electronic test technician for computers followed by retail work.

But everything changed for Michael in 1987. Michael explained, “In ’87 we were just finding out about (HIV/AIDS). My friends were dying all around me. I wasn’t sick yet, but I decided to just be safe and get tested after I saw my best friend pass away.”

When his condition worsened in 1994 and his doctors gave him two months to live, he decided to make a change. He switched to part-time work and moved to San Francisco to seek better medical treatment.

At a medical clinic in the Mission District, therapists recommended Project Open Hand.

He received a medical referral and signed up. Over time, he began to feel the positive effects of having nutritious meals to supplement his treatments. Michael went on full disability in 1996 and has lived in an apartment for residents with disabilities and HIV/AIDS for the past 21 years.

“Receiving Project Open Hand meals was a big part in saving my life.” — Michael B.

Michael was tested and the results came back positive. He immediately started medications, but continued to work in retail to pay his bills.

“It was hard. Working with customers is stressful, and then you add the fear of dying of HIV – it was a hard life back then,” Michael said.

When his condition worsened in 1994 and his doctors gave him two months to live, he decided to make a change. He switched to part-time work and moved to San Francisco to seek better medical treatment.

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“Project Open Hand meals was a big part in saving my life.” — Michael B.

Michael: Life Is Priceless

Marcus Toleno, Marketing and Communications Officer

You can help provide nutritious, life-saving meals to the critically ill like Michael by donating today. Visit https://www.openhand.org/donate.
The Foundation of Everything

Greetings. I am honored and humbled to join the relatively short list of CEOs who have helped to guide this organization over the past 30 years.

Most recently, and most familiar to me, is Mark Ryle who was such an important part of POH over the past six years. Mark has been a tremendous support to me in my first 30 days at Project Open Hand and I will endeavor to live up to his leadership and vision. Additionally, I’m grateful to the staff, and particularly the ones I work closely with on a day-to-day basis, who have been extremely helpful and supportive during my first few weeks.

Starting this journey in mid-March, which is National Nutrition Month, only to be followed up by April and National Volunteer Appreciation Month, helped to provide a perfect backdrop to set the stage for what makes Project Open Hand such an amazing organization.

National Nutrition Month began in the mid-1970s as a way to help encourage Americans to think about nutrition and acknowledge the incredible importance of proper nutrition plays in our lives. As you know, Ruth Brinker recognized the life-sustaining role nutrition played for people dealing with critical health issues when she prepared and delivered her first meals to people with HIV/AIDS in 1985.

Thirty years later, providing people who are dealing with complex health conditions with high-quality nutrition services is at the foundation of everything we do at Project Open Hand. National Nutrition Month is a chance for the rest of the nation to reflect on not only the important role nutrition plays in preventing illness, but also the role it can and does play in healing. With your help, we can live that concept every day at Project Open Hand where we provide meals and groceries that are the sustenance and medicine for thousands of people to realize a healthier life.

It’s one thing for an organization to have the knowledge and understanding of how to translate the nutritional science to health menus; however, preparing and getting over 2,500 of those meals out the door every day and to people in need is quite another challenge altogether. So, with April being National Volunteer Appreciation Month, we celebrated our volunteers, 9,000 strong, because if nutrition is the foundation of this organization, volunteers hold it all together.

Again looking back to Ruth, the first volunteer, she mobilized the community and these volunteers started Project Open Hand. From preparing thousands of meals to delivering meals all over San Francisco and Oakland, we quite literally could not do what we do without our amazing volunteers.

And then of course, you as a supporter are part of the life-blood of Project Open Hand. We can’t serve the Project Open Hand community without you.

I look forward to serving this great community and make those who are here now and those who helped build this organization very proud. And I hope you’ll be right by my side! Thank you!

Paul Hepfer
Chief Executive Officer

P.S. Consider giving to the Project Open Hand Endowment Fund.

Let’s Connect
openhand.org
San Francisco
730 Polk Street
San Francisco
(415) 447-2000
Oakland
701 15th Street
Oakland
(510) 622-0221

Paul’s Letter

Dining Out For Life Oakland

Uptown Oakland was abuzz when Project Open Hand brought Dining Out For Life to Oakland on April 25. Participating restaurants Lost & Found Beer Garden, Bar Cesar, Bird & Buffalo, Calavera, Hopscotch, Humphry Slocombe, Itani Ramen, and Soi 4 Bangkok Eatery were packed with diners who supported ending HIV in the Town. A portion of the day’s proceeds benefit Project Open Hand’s nutrition services in Oakland and San Francisco. Thanks to our diners and donors!
I grew up in San Francisco, which made me the person I am today. Helping my fellow San Franciscans is the least I can do for a city that has provided me with shelter for my next meal. Connecting with the community and focusing on themselves without having to worry about where their next meal is coming from is inspiring. Jarrod said.

Jarrod explains, “Seeing the smiles on their faces and helping them shop for groceries for the week makes me feel like I am helping, in a small way, to make their lives easier so that they can focus on themselves without having to worry about where their next meal is coming from. Connecting with the community and helping my fellow San Franciscans is the least I can do for a city that I grew up in. It made me the person I am today.”
Four Simple Salad Dressings

The Basic Formula for Salad Dressing

2 parts oil, 1 part acid (such as vinegar or lemon juice), and seasonings and flavor enhancers to taste (these can include dried/fresh herbs, spices, honey, mustard, chopped onion – the list is endless!)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balsamic Vinaigrette</th>
<th>Mustard Vinaigrette</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/3 cup olive oil</td>
<td>2/3 cup olive oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3 cup balsamic vinegar</td>
<td>1/3 cup red wine vinegar</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 teaspoons Dijon or whole grain mustard</td>
<td>2 tablespoons Dijon mustard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt and pepper to taste if you do not have a processor or blender</td>
<td>Salt and pepper to taste</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lemon Herb Dressing</th>
<th>Asian Dressing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/3 cup olive oil</td>
<td>2/3 cup olive oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/3 cup lemon juice</td>
<td>1/3 cup rice vinegar</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 tablespoons Dijon mustard</td>
<td>2 tablespoons soy sauce</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon lemon zest (optional)</td>
<td>2 teaspoons Dijon or whole grain mustard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 teaspoon honey</td>
<td>1 teaspoon minced garlic (or garlic powder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt to taste</td>
<td>1-2 teaspoons sesame oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 tablespoons fresh or dried herbs of your choice</td>
<td>Salt and pepper to taste</td>
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AIDS Walk San Francisco is one of the most visible and recognizable events in the Western United States. Notable not only for its size, the Walk attracts a diverse group of participants. People of all ages, races, and backgrounds come together each year in a massive, powerful, and inspiring demonstration of compassion and action.

Visit sf.aidswalk.net to sign up.