

Meat + Times

Cover Story

A Good Meal

Newton doesn't remember when he learned about Project Open Hand. ("Some referral, I think," he says. "Probably someone who mentioned it to me for the AIDS demographic.") However, he keeps coming back because he believes we have some of the better food and grocery options around.

It's a high compliment coming from someone who can list off a catalogue of different breads without flinching ("Sourdough, batons, boules, baguettes, pizzelles"), and whose eyes light up when he talks about garlic.

"Garlic," Newton says cheekily, "is my religion."

A Project Open Hand client for nearly fifteen years, Newton is charmingly eccentric. He knows the scientific names of most plants and he can talk about topics like mitochondria and cellular metabolism in meticulous detail with ease. He smiles when he talks about some of his favorite things: hiking, biking, gardening and horticulture, architecture, history, and "a good meal."

Newton has lived in the Bay Area for more than four decades, having lived in the city for the majority of that time. Before retiring, his career was just as varied as his interests. He's been a horticulturist, naval shipyard office worker, tour guide, and even a high school teacher. He speaks four different languages, has an undergraduate degree in horticulture, and a master's degree in French. He left the workforce in the early 2000s to care for his mother, who passed away a few years later from a stroke.

Anyone who talks to Newton will come away from that conversation with a new friend and a bit of new information. As he walks through the San Francisco Grocery Center

with his hiking backpack and floppy sunhat on, his uncanny ability to make friends is clear as he weaves through the line, saying hello and catching up with nearly everyone in it.

"I still do a fair amount of walking," Newton says, as he fiddles with his backpack, and explains that it's for both carrying groceries and hiking. "Just not the same distance I used to." He goes on to explain that he used to be able to do the fourteen-mile roundtrip hike to Alamere Falls in Marin, but now he can only do about half of that. He says he is one of the lucky ones, though,

"I'm majorly thankful to donors for enabling Project Open Hand's ability to increase my aging demographic's access to clean and healthy food."

despite the toll the chronic inflammatory response HIV has had on him.

"Most who were infected in my time - most or all - are deceased," he says.

Diagnosed in 1984, Newton falls under the category of a "long-term slow progressor" living with HIV, a person whose CD4 T-cells count stays above a certain level for five years. Roughly 5% of people living with HIV fall into this category. The deep visceral fat that has built up around his abdomen because of medication, though, is a constant issue, Newton says.

"It's both medically, in terms of health, and aesthetically, in terms of appearance, ruinous," he laughs.

His doctor, Newton says, is very supportive of him coming to Project Open Hand because of the role nutrition plays in his health.

While he has fond memories of eating out at San Francisco restaurants, and can list about a dozen different places he used to enjoy, he says that the days of being able to eat out affordably are gone.

"It used to be that those places probably cost no more than cooking at home," but now he pretty much sticks to cooking in his kitchen, he says.

"I'm a halfway decent cook. I couldn't make you a béchamel sauce, but I can make very simple things," says Newton. "I do what I call 'peasant cooking.' It's survival food. Nothing fancy, but I make a lot of roasted vegetables, and

Avocados, strawberries, melons, herbs, and garlic procured from local farms are just a few of the new, seasonal produce items available. In particular, Newton says that he's been thrilled about the garlic.

"It's wonderful to have that because garlic at a regular grocery store is ridiculously expensive," Newton says. He noticed that there's been more variety and says he's thankful for it. "I've loved the cauliflower, too."

Project Open Hand, he says, has been a huge resource for him to have more variety in his diet and ensure that he always has good nutrition available. For someone living with HIV like him, he says that nutrition is 'central to survival.'

"Having access to variety like we get here and food items we might not otherwise acquire is key," Newton says.

"Nutrition itself is of core importance, by virtue of our cellular metabolism, brain, organ, bone, soft tissue regeneration... and side-stepping the risk of cancers, ulcers, premature teeth loss, osteoporosis, decalcification of the bones... It's extremely important."

Most of all, he's thankful for the in-season produce and for Project Open Hand.

"I'm majorly thankful to donors," says Newton, "for enabling Project Open Hand's ability to increase my aging demographic's access to clean and healthy food."

You make this possible. Thank you!

For other stories or to consider a gift, go to www.openhand.org

by Kimberly Kollwitz,
Manager, Marketing and Communications



Paul’s Letter

More Choices, More Support

Dear Friend,
We are always working to maximize the choices our clients have. So, when we select produce for our grocery centers, we want them to feel heard, respected, and excited to eat the food that they take home to support their health.

Since May 2023, federal funding through the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) has allowed us to do just that. Today, fruits and vegetables like strawberries, figs, broccolini, avocados, and garlic all rotate seasonally throughout our locations across the Bay Area.

We base our produce orders on preference surveys clients fill out on a regular basis. This

not only allows us to provide produce that is more culturally appropriate, but also creates a more robust variety of fruit, vegetables, and even fresh herbs.

Most importantly, we’re able to provide clients with the types of produce they want to see, which is a critical step in supporting their health.

The GusNIP program allows us to purchase even more high-quality, California-grown produce than ever, helping us to create partnerships with local family farms within miles of the Bay Area, and building out operational infrastructure and maximizing client choices well into the future.

While the GusNIP program is federally

funded, it will only continue for two years. We have high hopes that, even once the program is complete, we’ll be able to continue this amazing program with your support and the support from neighbors like you.

In this new year, we are excited to shine a light on this ongoing program that means putting more fresh, seasonal produce in the hands of our clients than ever. Thank you for your continued support, which makes all of this possible!



Paul Hepfer,
Chief Executive Officer



Thank You for Joining Us at
Hand to Hand 2023

Thank you to everyone who attended the 31st annual Hand to Hand Gala on Friday, November 17, 2023. This year’s theme, Gratitude and Regrowth, reflected on the tremendous support Project Open Hand has received over the last few years. This support has allowed our organization to grow our capacity, expand our services, and flourish despite many challenges.

Special thanks go out to The Bread Project, whom we hosted the event in community partnership with, Master Chef Sponsor, the Goldman Foundation, and all of the donors, board members, Project Open Hand staff and volunteers who helped to put on such an amazing event. We can’t wait to see you at Hand to Hand 2024!



Smuin's The Christmas
Ballet: LGBTQ+ Night

Smuin's The Christmas Ballet: LGTBQ+ Night returned for one night on December 19 to a packed house. 25% of the evening's ticket sales were donated to Project Open Hand and other organizations committed to supporting the queer communities of San Francisco. Thank you to everyone who joined us, and to Smuin for hosting another amazing event!

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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: Seasonal Produce, An Exciting Addition to Food Is Medicine

In the cover story, Newton shared how excited he is about the fresh produce he can now find in the Project Open Hand grocery stores. That's an immediate result of the produce prescription program that Project Open Hand started in mid-2023 with funding from the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Intervention Program (GusNIP).

A nationwide initiative that includes over 225 projects, GusNIP is focused on providing incentives to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables. At Project Open Hand, we're using it to increase access to high quality, California-grown, and culturally appropriate produce to improve the health of our clients.

Developed in partnership with UC San Francisco, the produce prescription allows clients to receive weekly grocery packages that include fruit, vegetables, and herbs purchased from local farms and prescribed by healthcare providers. Produce intake and its impact on the health of clients is then measured and evaluated on a regular basis by providers.

"This is a critical piece of the framework of food is medicine to prevent and manage chronic disease," explains Project Open Hand Program Design Manager Erika Tribett. "Part of this effort is to better understand how to support people that are using food to support their health."

In addition to the health benefits for clients, the GusNIP funding allows Project Open Hand to offer a wider variety of produce from regional farms and those led by BIPOC farmers. Over the course of the program, the economic impact on local farmers from produce purchases are measured and evaluated, too.

In the first six months of the program's launch alone, Project Open Hand purchased \$113,000 worth of California-grown produce, with more than two-thirds of it sourced within 150 miles of our grocery centers. 65%

percent of these fruits, vegetables, and herbs are organically grown, and 80% come from BIPOC-led farms.

Produce Purchased Based on Client Preference and Cultural Relevance

"The produce has been wonderful lately," said one Project Open Hand client.

"I was excited to receive melon, garlic, and strawberries!" Said another.

The produce purchased with GusNIP is largely based upon the preferences expressed by clients in surveys, regular client town halls, and conversations with nutritionists. Avocados, cilantro, shiitake and cremini mushrooms, pomegranates, bok choy, and



centered, dignified and inclusive services," says Erika. "By providing culturally appropriate foods, we are showing our clients that we recognize, value, and encourage them to embrace their diversity, and that their cultural foods should also be part of a sustainable healthy diet."

In addition, culturally appropriate foods are integral to fighting nutrition insecurity. Because many clients have a strong adherence to specific, culturally relevant foods, providing that produce is integral to ensuring that it gets used when they cook.

"Clients are likely to be more familiar with preparing fruit and vegetables that have a place in their culture and history, and they are more likely

include information on what the item is, how it is prepared, as well as storage tips and the nutrition/health benefits of consuming the product. Clients also receive information about the farms where the produce is purchased from, such as where the farm is located and information about the farmers.

Nutrition Assistant Yessica Arias, who regularly conducts food demonstrations to show clients how to cook with new or unfamiliar ingredients, says that she is always looking for recipes that can include GusNIP produce.

"For example," she says, "We've used recipes at demonstrations like plant-based pesto, and thyme and dill yogurt sauce. We've also displayed recipes in the grocery centers like 'Broccoli with Peanut Butter and Ginger,' and 'Butternut Squash and Turnip Creamy Soup.'"

Looking Ahead

GusNIP has created a unique opportunity that allows Project Open Hand to work towards the goals of procuring produce that is fresh, local, and in-line with what clients want - as well as pilot and develop the systems and processes that are needed to continue these purchases in the future.

However, the GusNIP grant will only continue through 2024. After that, we'll look to our community and donors to help us raise the funds to continue local, BIPOC-led, and culturally relevant produce purchases in the future.

Your continued support is so important! Help us to raise the funds needed to continue to purchase this fresh produce once the program completes. To donate, visit www.openhand.org/donate today.

Written by the Project Open Hand team

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garlic are all examples of produce that's been requested by clients and purchased using it.

Fernanda Nunes, Bilingual Registered Dietitian, says that this new choice is great for clients who have dietary patterns aligned with traditional diets from where they were raised, too: "Nutrition assessments - where clients are asked about what a typical day of eating looks like - show us that many clients maintain 'traditional' diets based on their cultural heritage."

"Our end goal is to improve health through intake of nutritious food, with the values of providing client-

to consume foods that are more familiar to their palate and food prep patterns," says Fernanda. "By prioritizing items that have this cultural relevance for our clients, we can more appropriately support their nutrition needs."

Clients Also Receive Nutrition Education

In addition to the produce, Project Open Hand clients also receive emails and educational materials that describe the new fruits and vegetables and include ideas on how to use them.

For each item purchased with the GusNIP grant, Project Open Hand produces informational trifolds that



Project Open Hand Plate Clubs

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From Our
Kitchen
to Yours

Broccolini with Peanut Butter and Ginger

Ingredients

- 1-2/3 cups bimi or baby broccolini
 - 2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
 - 3-1/2 tsp fresh ginger, finely chopped
- 5-10 cherry tomatoes
 - Extra virgin olive oil to taste

Dressing

- 1-2/3 tbsp peanut butter
 - 2-1/3 tbsp soy sauce
 - 1/4 tbsp sesame oil
- 1/3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
 - Black sesame seeds
 - 1 tsp of sugar

Instructions

1. Wash the broccolini and tomatoes and drain well.
2. Cut the broccolini into bite-sized pieces.
3. Peel both the garlic and ginger, finely chopping each.
4. Heat a wide frying pan with a little olive oil. (Add the amount of olive oil based on your preference.)
5. When frying pan is hot, add the minced garlic and ginger. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes on medium-high heat until fragrant.
6. Add the broccolini and cook for 4 to 6 minutes over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally so the garlic and ginger don't burn.
7. While the broccolini is cooking, mix the peanut butter, soy sauce, sesame oil, apple cider vinegar, and sugar together in a separate dish until smooth to make the dressing. Set aside.
8. Add the cherry tomatoes to the pan and saute for 2 to 3 minutes.
9. Once well mixed, and when the broccolini is ready, lower the heat and gradually season the vegetables with the dressing. Pour the dressing over the entire dish with a spoon and mix it so that it's evenly distributed.



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