



# Meal Times



Cover Story

## To Be Alive

*“When you lose everybody... to be alive is awesome.”*

Project Open Hand client Matthew has an energy about him. You can sit down with him for more than an allotted period of time and not even know it, because you just can't stop talking with him.

Positivity radiates from him. You can see it in his eyes. Feel it through his smile. Hear it through his voice.

Matthew is this way because he is grateful to be here. “I had a universe of friends when I first moved to San Francisco. I'm the only one left out of about 40 to 50 people.”

Matthew was born in Florida. He and his family moved around quite a bit throughout the state. After attending an all-boys Catholic high school, he went off to college and received a Bachelor of Arts in history from the University of Florida.

In 1980, Matthew moved to San Francisco, where some of his friends were already residents of the City by the Bay. He worked multiple retail jobs after he arrived, and started to make a community and life for himself.

But everything began to change during the 80s. The HIV/AIDS epidemic began to take hold, and unfortunately, friends of his were losing their lives to it. In November

of 1988, Matthew decided to get tested – the results were positive for HIV.

“I remember I went to 17th Street (in San Francisco). They had a health clinic there. Back in the day, everybody had a number. I remember I had done the test, and I came in to get the results, the fellow that was volunteering and he said I was positive,” Matthew said. “I was kind of in a daze, but I didn't freak out. I'm not one to freak out.”

***“If you put water in the gas tank, you're not going to go anywhere. If you put high-tech gasoline, which is the food (Project Open Hand) gives – it only makes sense!”***

He decided to take action. Along with taking the necessary medications, Matthew also signed up to receive Project Open Hand Meals the same year he was diagnosed.

“Back then the meals would come in a take-out box and it would have a sandwich, piece of fruit, and, you know, a cookie or something.”

Matthew continued to take care of himself with medication, nutrition and exercise. He then went back East for a few years before returning back to San

Francisco in 2008. He signed up to receive Project Open Hand meals again, but this time the meals were more medically tailored.

“Now it's Brussels sprouts, vegetables, pork, chicken breast, and pasta – it's a really good balance,” Matthew said.

“If you put water in the gas tank, you're not going to go anywhere. If you put high-tech gasoline, which is the food (Project Open Hand)

gives – it only makes sense!”

**With improved nutrition, exercise, and medication, his white blood cell count are close to normal.**

“I come in on Tuesdays. I do my grocery shopping, and what's really awesome, these wonderful people give me free delicious, healthy food and I'm set for the week,” he said.

And the Project Open Hand staff enjoys every minute of the day's he is here.

Matthew, who is now 68 years old, retired and lives

in the Richmond District of San Francisco, has lived a meaningful life. He volunteers at various organizations.

**Part of the reason why he gives his time to the community is because he carries friends from the past with him.**

“Sometimes I drive down the street and I have memories of them,” he said. “I've been HIV half my life.”

“By the grace of God, a lot of people moan and groan about what they don't have. I feel grateful for what I do have is the most important stuff. Good community. Taking care of myself. Enjoy life. I want to live to be 100 – Life is good.”

Over 25 percent of Project Open Hand clients are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. As medications and nutrition continue to help them live longer, the complex health conditions associated with aging are coming to the forefront.

You can help our clients, like Matthew, continue to thrive. Will you consider a gift today? Thank you! To give your gift online please go to [openhand.org/donate](http://openhand.org/donate).

by Marcus Tolero,  
Marketing and Communications Manager





Paul's Letter

Being of Service

Dear Friend,

As you know, it's our mission to improve health outcomes and quality of life by providing nutritious meals to the sick and vulnerable, and caring for and educating our community.

That word, "community", is what stands out to me, and the question I think of is: How can we better help our community?

As an organization, every decision we've made, from the very beginning when Ruth was cooking out of her kitchen for a small group of individuals, to the nearly 7,000 clients we now serve in the Bay Area is all about supporting our community with life-saving, nutritional services.

The people we serve come from very diverse backgrounds. They've experienced hardships I can never imagine. Tragedies I might never encounter, and complex health conditions that would challenge every part of my being.

No matter what they faced in the past, present, or will face in the future – we must, and we will, be there for them because it's in the DNA of every staff member,

volunteer, and supporter like you. We are all here to be of service.

That service can happen on an individual basis, like for HIV-client Matthew, who graces our cover with his beaming smile. Every time he comes in to visit, our weeks-



Vickie Giusti and Paul Hepfer

worth of nutritious meals will help him continue to feel "alive."

Being of service can happen during the most difficult of times. Vickie Giusti helped launch Project Open Hand in Oakland on the same day of the Loma Prieta Earthquake on October 17, 1989

Her efforts, along with the help from countless volunteers, ensured that clients and community members affected by the disaster had a meal.

That's why when asked, "How can you help the community?", my answer is simply to be of service, especially to the many people living in my community.

What will your answer be? You too can be of service to your community, to a person in need, by making a gift today at [openhand.org/donate](http://openhand.org/donate). Thank you!

*Paul Hepfer*

Paul Hepfer  
Chief Executive Officer

Will You Consider a Special Gift?

As you're seeing in your own monthly bills, groceries and gas have become much more expensive. We're seeing this as well. And yet, more clients depend on us than ever before. We cannot let them down. Donate at [openhand.org/donate](http://openhand.org/donate)



Upcoming Events:

There's always something cooking with events. Here's what's on tap:

Hand to Hand

December 9<sup>th</sup> | Friday

Smuin Ballet

December 20<sup>th</sup> | Friday

Contact [events@openhand.org](mailto:events@openhand.org) for more information.

MOVING FORWARD  
WITH THE COMMUNITY  
30 Years of HAND  
TO HAND

Friday, December 9th  
Evening Celebration  
The Hibernia  
1 Jones St  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Presented by



Project Open Hand  
meals with love

In community  
partnership with



the bread project

Sponsored by



Redwood  
Credit Union

Sutter Health

Dated as of 10/05/2022

Quarterly News from Project Open Hand | Published Since 1989

Issue No. 128



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.

EDITOR/WRITER:  
Marcus Tolero, Manager,  
Marketing and Communications

FOUNDER:  
Ruth Brinker

Board of Directors

CHAIR:  
Mike Henry,  
Google

VICE CHAIR:  
Ruth Yankoupe,  
Getaround

SECRETARY:  
Aditya Wakankar,  
Sangamo Therapeutics

FINANCE CHAIR:  
John Colton,  
Kaiser Permanente

MEMBERS:  
Andrew Chang,  
Osterweis Capital

Theresa Ng Chang,  
Splunk

Susanna Holt,  
Autodesk

Dr. Preston Maring, M.D.,  
Physician

Ginny McSwine,  
Salesforce

Andrea Wilkinson,  
Zogenix

Helene York,  
The Food Business School of the  
Culinary Institute of America

Vishwa Chandra,  
McKinsey & Company

Jennifer Wieman Petraglia,  
Splunk

Jennifer Drimmer-Rokovich,  
Tenaya Therapeutics, Inc.

Richard Long,  
Certy Partner

Jason Wei,  
Facebook

Arthur Wood,  
UCSF Health

Executive Team

Paul Hepfer  
Chief Executive Officer

Ana Ayala  
VP, Programs

Jonathan Jump  
VP, Operations

Herbert Dong  
VP, Finance and  
Information Technology

Let's Connect  
[openhand.org](http://openhand.org)



San Francisco  
730 Polk Street  
San Francisco  
CA 94109  
(415) 447-2300

Oakland  
1921 San Pablo Ave.  
Oakland  
CA 94612  
(510) 622-0221

FOOD=LOVE



Community

# Spotlight: Vickie was the hero that kept East Bay going...

Vickie Giusti’s role at Project Open Hand spanned over three decades. During that time, she helped a countless number of clients in the East Bay as a caseworker – ensuring every single one of them had access to all our services and networks.

But there is one specific date Vickie will always be remembered for – October 17, 1989.

It was supposed to be the grand opening of Project Open Hand in Oakland. Vickie had been preparing for this day for weeks.

But the scene she witnessed was not at all what she envisioned.

A long line of pickup trucks formed outside of the West Oakland BART. Drivers were anxiously waiting for droves of volunteers wearing Project Open Hand t-shirts to come down the escalators carrying hot meals prepared for an unanticipated emergency delivery.

As soon as the trucks were loaded, drivers carefully set off to deliver meals to clients and those displaced in shelters in the East Bay, just hours after the devastation of the Loma Prieta magnitude 6.9 Earthquake.

Prior to the earthquake that caused the loss of 67 lives and

\$5 billion in damage, Vickie met up with a friend in a hotel near San Francisco International Airport. She was ready to cheer on the San Francisco Giants against the Oakland A’s in the "Battle of the Bay" World Series. Then the clock hit 5:04 p.m., and the broadcast cutoff.

“We were just getting ready to sit down for the ball game, and then the quake happened,” Giusti said.

“The plan was to watch the game and go home, but I ended up staying at the hotel...and didn’t make it home until the next day.”

Vickie’s family and friends were unharmed and safe. The Bay Area was a different story!

A part of the Bay Bridge collapsed. In West Oakland, the upper deck of the Cypress Street Viaduct of Interstate 880 fell and crushed drivers on the deck below. Smoke from fires engulfed the Marina District in San Francisco. The Bay Area was a disaster zone, but Project Open Hand was ready to answer the call for help.

Our kitchen, located back then on 17th Street in San Francisco, was one of the few commercial

kitchens still operational and ready to cook meals. We quickly collaborated with the Red Cross to deliver meals to displaced families and individuals at shelters in the East Bay.

Volunteers in San Francisco would pick up the meals and cross the Bay by way of BART to the West Oakland Station. Pickup truck drivers, many of whom heard the call for help on the radio, would meet the volunteers, pack their trucks, and fan out across the Bay to deliver the meals.

Vickie Giusti had prepared to orchestrate meal delivery to Project Open Hand clients, but now she was called on to coordinate over 50 volunteers and dozens of trucks to get the meals to clients’ homes and shelters in the East Bay.

“It was really rough. It was hard...the coordinating of it. I was out there with my husband and my baby. It was chaotic,” said Vickie.

Vickie remembers one unforgettable moment when the first volunteers began arriving around noon.

“I keep thinking about when the volunteers in Project Open Hand t-shirts came off BART with the food, and the people that met them,” she said. “It’s just amazing how people can gather together and make things happen.”

For weeks, Project Open Hand produced 15,000 meals daily and with the support of community volunteers, delivered them to clients and to those affected by the disaster on both sides of the Bay.

“I thought it was incredible that Project Open Hand stepped in right away,” Vickie said. “As one of the few industrial working kitchens in the City, they stepped right up to the plate.”

The launch might not have been what Vickie envisioned, but it laid an everlasting foundation for Project Open Hand in the East Bay.

Vickie recently retired after 33 years of providing meals with love, now spends her time swimming, dining, traveling, and cuddling her new granddaughter. But she will always be remembered by Project Open Hand and its clients for what she did on that fateful day on October 17, 1989.

by Marcus Tolero,  
Marketing and Communications Manager



## 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 April 1, 2022 through August 31, 2022. If you have questions about this list, please contact [donations@openhand.org](mailto:donations@openhand.org) or 415-447-2300.

**PLATINUM PLATE CLUB**  
\$50,000 - \$99,999

John and Marcia Goldman Philanthropic Fund  
Hellman Foundation  
Estate of William Osuna  
Linda Walsh and Keith Cowan

**GOLD PLATE CLUB**  
\$25,000 - \$49,999

The Hreha-Zandi Family Trust  
MAC VIVA GLAM  
Redwood Credit Union

**SILVER PLATE CLUB**  
\$10,000 - \$24,999

Estate of Susan Brady Alfaro  
Delta Dental Community Care Foundation  
Sharon Dickson and Jeff Gray

**BRONZE PLATE CLUB**  
\$5,000 - \$9,999

Anonymous (1)  
Charles Schwab Foundation  
Community Thrift Store  
David Giltinan  
Robert Grossman  
The Humanist Fund  
Estate of Sylvester James  
Anne and Martin Roher  
Jennifer Drimmer Rokovich  
Tito's Handmade Vodka  
Lynn Tolin

**CRYSTAL PLATE CLUB**  
\$2,500 - \$4,999

Alameda Alliance for Health  
Anonymous (2)  
James Scott Bays  
Susan M. and George L. Crow  
Estate of Judith Mary Glover  
James Kenney\*  
Salesforce.com  
Summitry Financial Management  
Chris Welch  
Mrs. Jane Zaloudek and  
Dr. Charles Zaloudek

**CHINA PLATE CLUB**  
\$1,000 - \$2,499

Anonymous (4)  
AvidXchange Inc  
Anne Bolla  
Sheila Brady  
Jane Brady\*  
Dennis Breen  
Steven Ames Brown  
The Cadmus Group LLC  
Andrew Canepa  
Karin and David Chamberlain  
Theresa Ng Chang  
Helen L. Chen  
John Drago  
The Ed and Joyce Drake  
Family Fund  
Amy Eskin and  
Mitchell Shapson\*  
George Fisher  
Francine Parker  
Family Foundation  
Diane Freeman  
Robert Frey  
John Garfinkle  
Lynn Garney\*  
Patricia Gavello &  
Alfred Gavello  
John Glass\*  
Linda Glick\*

Charlotte and Hy Goode  
Grass Roots Gay Rights  
Foundation  
Sarah (Sallie) Griffith and  
Dick Griffith  
Jeanne Gulner and  
Kenneth Rees\*  
Heather Hanly and Dan Purcell\*  
Mary Henderson  
Betty Hoener  
Elizabeth and Thomas Jones III  
Walter Kennedy and  
Deborah McNab  
Claire Kramsch  
KSH Architects  
Robert L. Landis Bypass Trust  
Diane Lee Charitable Fund  
John Lindstrom\*  
Ann Ludwig  
Eve and Niall Lynch  
Beverly and Thomas Marlow  
The Marshall Kirk McKusick and  
Eric P. Allman Foundation  
McLeod Family  
Angelo Meola  
Anthony Mirante &  
Catherine Mirante  
Russell Nelson

Kathleen O'Sullivan and  
S. Maurice Krumrey  
Carolyn and Damian Parker\*  
Jennifer and Robert Petraglia\*  
Randall Presuhn and  
Timothy Nguyen  
Jackie Relaford  
Leroy Rey  
William Robinson  
Judith Rosenberg and  
Alan Fried  
Richard Ross  
Christine and James Russell  
Ronald Saturno  
William Schoch and  
Joshua Stein  
Prochy Sethna  
Neal Siler  
Elizabeth Smith\*  
Smith McFee 2013 Trust  
Giving Fund  
Harriet Sollod and  
Mitchell Sollod  
The Stoper Family  
Charitable Fund  
Stuart J. Sweetser and  
Robert S. Carroll\*  
Tomda Fund



\* 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](https://openhand.org/give/supper-club).





## Classic Breakfast Omelet

### Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- salt and pepper
- 1/2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup spinach, chopped
- 1 finely diced tomato

### Instructions

1. In a medium bowl, beat the eggs with a pinch each of salt and pepper.
2. Spread oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add eggs & cook, stirring & tilting the pan, until beginning to firm, 1-2 minutes. Sprinkle in the spinach and diced tomatoes.
3. Fold the eggs over the filling, let cook another minute, flip over the omelet and cook 1-2 more minutes.



Project Open Hand  
meals with love

THANK YOU

DINING OUT  
FOR LIFE

#### Restaurant Partners:

Le Bateau Ivre • Nuttin' Butter Cookies • Cafe Buenos Aires  
Pig in a Pickle • Communitē Table • Calavera Mexican Kitchen & Agave Bar  
Lin Jia Asian Kitchen • Telegraph Beer Garden • Soi 4 Bangkok Eatery  
Bird & Buffalo • Baker & Commons • El Patio  
La Mediterranee • Chop Bar • Parlour Oakland  
Humphry Slocombe (Berkeley, Emeryville, and Oakland)

## DINING OUT FOR LIFE EAST BAY

Thank you to all our restaurant partners and diners who participated in Dining Out For Life East Bay on September 29.

Because you dined out on this special day at our partnering restaurants, you also supported our efforts in providing life-saving nutrition to individuals diagnosed with HIV. Thank you to all who dined out to give back! Thank you to our local sponsor, Tito's Handmade Vodka.



Continue to support our #DOFLEastBay partners by visiting their restaurants. Scan the QR code to see our listed partners.

Sponsored by



Non Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Boston, MA  
Permit #53692

Project Open Hand  
730 Polk Street  
San Francisco, CA 94109



To Be Alive

Cover Story



Spotlight:  
Vickie Giusti | PAGE 3

From Our Kitchen to Yours:  
Classic Breakfast Omelette | PAGE 4

