



MealTimes



Spotlight On

Making a Connection

“Here comes trouble,” Client Engagement Specialist Joe Wicht jokingly said.

Although the mask hides Vicky’s face, there’s no hiding the million-watt smile beneath it when she hears the comment.

She uses her power chair walker to move from the waiting line to where Joe is sitting at his desk behind the plexiglass in the second-floor grocery center.

Although Vicky’s movements are slow, there is a joyful energy with each step.

She’s not only shopping for nutritious groceries, but she’s also connecting with a friend.

“What’ll it be today, Vicky?” Joe asks.

Vicky looks at the menu of items in the display case and begins to fill out her order.

“I feel like family. I feel like a VIP. I feel a lot of love here,” she said. “There’s a connection.”

It’s the connection with our staff that makes the difference in the lives of so many of our clients like Vicky.

And the connection that clients like Vicki experience with our staff and services is what makes the difference in their lives.

Before she received *meals with love* from Project Open Hand, life was hard for Vicky.

Born in Oakland and raised in Richmond, Vicky had a traumatic past. During her childhood years

she experienced sexual abuse and had an estranged relationship with her father.

As an adult, three of her brothers passed away – two from a heart attack and one from gun violence – and a sister succumbed to lupus.

Although Vicky held a job as a residential specialist and started a family, all the trauma she experienced led her down a path of alcohol and drug addiction.

But it was on March 12, 1994 (the same date as her grandmother’s birthday) at 3:30 pm she received life-changing news. Vicky was diagnosed with HIV, contracted from her husband.

“I was in denial, and at that time nobody was educated about HIV/

through a medical provider and began visiting the grocery center for life-saving food.

“At the time, I was homeless and I was hungry,” she said. “The groceries saved me.”

But what she didn’t realize then was that her decision to connect with Project Open Hand would lead her down a path of healthy living through nutrition.

“I started to notice that the nutritious meals I was eating was helping me,” Vicky said. “Project Open Hand was the beginning of my transformation.”

And she was all in.

She connected with the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to discuss meal preparation and

people including her partner and two best friends. The connection with Project Open Hand continued because meals were delivered right to her door in the senior building she lives in.

“It made me feel like I’m not alone. Somebody is going to come see about me,” she said. “I knew Project Open Hand would be here. Somebody would check on me.”

This brings us back to the present day, when Vicky approaches Joe Wicht, seated behind the plexiglass.

“She has been through hell and back. I adore her,” Joe said.

For Vicky, the exchange goes beyond the services we provide. It’s about the connection she’s felt not only with Joe, but with the organization as a whole.

“It’s family.”

And like family, Project Open Hand will always “go see about her” and all its other clients.

Project Open Hand serves over 3,500 wellness clients who are battling critical illnesses. Thirty five percent are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and 13 percent have a cardiovascular disease.

Will you help clients, like Vicky, stay connected to our services by donating today?

Visit openhand.org/donate.

Thank you!

"I feel a lot of love here...there's a connection."

-Vicky

AIDS. My mother believed I would infect my daughter, so my mom would wash my daughter in bleach.

“Back then (HIV) was a death sentence. Now I’m a long-term survivor,” Vicky said, who also has heart disease.

Although she went through many harrowing experiences including homelessness, she decided to fight for her survival 15 years ago.

First, she decided to get clean. She hasn’t touched drugs or alcohol since.

Second, she got connected with Project Open Hand in Oakland

planning. She took home every brochure, menu, and informational packet she could grab.

And when she moved to San Francisco’s Tenderloin District after a life spent in the East Bay, she began visiting the SF Grocery Center and attended Project Open Hand cooking classes. She even signed up to receive meals through our Community Nutrition Program, a communal setting where seniors and adults with disabilities can connect and enjoy a meal, together.

And when COVID-19 hit, she experienced the effects of isolation and depression and the loss of 17

by Marcus Tolero,
Marketing and Communications Manager



Paul's Letter

What It Means To Be Connected



Dear Friend,

On the surface, it's very easy to say we provide a particular service to our community. You could say we provide our clients with medically-tailored nutrition. More than 2,500 nutritious meals and 200 bags of groceries daily in support of community members in need.

It's what we do. It helps our clients improve and maintain their health. But there it much more. It goes well beyond the meals or groceries. It's a basic and important human need.

Connection.

When clients sign up to receive Project Open Hand services in San Francisco and Alameda counties, they are immediately connected with our staff at different levels of the organization. Our client services department will reach out to them for intake. Then our team of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists will connect with them for a nutrition counseling and education session. Then we encourage our clients to take advantage of all other services we offer because we want them to feel connected to Project Open Hand.

Like our cover-story client Vicky, who started with us years ago in Oakland and continued with us when she moved to San Francisco. She not only received meals and groceries, but she also enjoyed meals with new friends in a communal setting at Community Nutrition Program sites in the City. And when she was isolated at home during COVID, her connection with us continued because we delivered *meals with love* right to her door. But that same feeling of connection is felt here as well. Like Joe Wicht, whose interactions with clients have a profound effect and give added meaning to our work.

As Joe said in our spotlight story, "... if our clients want to fight hard to live, we will continue to fight with them." It's the reason why he, the staff and volunteers go beyond their normal duties because they want to let clients know that they are not alone on their path to better health. Over 5,500 seniors and adults with disabilities receive meals from us through our Community Nutrition Program. Over 3,500 clients receive meals and fresh groceries through our Wellness Program in San Francisco and Oakland. Over 4,800 volunteers donate their time. Over 120 staff, which includes the kitchen, delivery

Project Open Hand Receives Grant From Bayer Fund

Project Open Hand received a grant from Bayer Fund, which will be used to provide medically tailored meals (MTM) to clients with heart disease and cancer and support the nutrition intervention experience for its clients in the East Bay. "This is a substantial showing of support from Bayer Fund and will greatly impact our work. Many of our clients belong to some of the most vulnerable populations in our East Bay community. Not only do they need access to food, but they also need access to healthy, lifesaving nutrition - and this grant helps us continue to address a critical issue - nutrition security," said Paul Hepfer, Chief Executive Officer of Project Open Hand. The grant will not only provide support to our organization, but also the community we serve by allowing us to recruit, enroll, and serve 55 low-income adults diagnosed with stage 3 or 4 cancer or congestive heart failure in the East Bay.

Read the Latest Issue Brief by the California Food is Medicine Coalition (CalFIMC)

The brief focuses on food and nutrition insecurity, linkages to serious diseases, economic and racial disparities, and the significance of MTM in advancing nutrition and health in California and beyond, particularly in the context of COVID-19. Visit the link to read more <https://bit.ly/3BW12U9>.

drivers, and operations staff, work tirelessly from the early morning into the night, every day. And all of us are all connected in our belief that Meals do Heal. None of this is possible without your continued support. Thank you!

Paul Hepfer
Chief Executive Officer
To help, go to openhand.org.

Quarterly News from Project Open Hand | Published Since 1989



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

CHAIR OF FINANCE COMMITTEE:
John Colton,
Kaiser Permanente
MEMBERS:
Vishwa Chandra,
McKinsey & Company
Andrew Chang,
Osterweis Capital
Theresa Ng Chang,
Splunk
Preston Maring, M.D.,
M.D., Physician
Ginny McSwine,
Salesforce
Jennifer Wieman Petraglia,
Splunk
Andrea Wilkinson,
Zogenix
Helene York,
Guckenheim

Executive Team

Paul Hepfer
Chief Executive Officer
Ana Ayala
VP, Programs
Jonathan Jump
VP, Operations
Herbert Dong
VP, Finance and
Information Technology
Amor Santiago
VP, Development and Community
Affairs

Issue No. 125
Let's Connect
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



Community Spotlight: Inspired

Client Engagement Specialist Joe Wicht is a pianist, and a good one. For the past 14 years, he has played at Martuni's, a popular night spot where patrons belt out tunes to whatever song they ask Joe to cover.

"It's an open MIC, and I'm the orchestra," Joe said.

But what he really loves doing is composing his own music to a poem -- just don't ask him to write the words.

"I'm not a wordsmith. I find a poem that says something that I would like to say to someone else. It's hard to find a poem that doesn't speak to you about somebody or something you've experienced. When I'm composing, I take those words and make it musically to what I would have done," Joe said.

And if it were his choice, he would do this every minute of the day.

"Piano playing is a great way to earn a living, but it doesn't come with insurance, which is why the day job comes in handy," Joe says jokingly.

Joe, who grew up in Virginia Beach, Virginia, started his "day job" with Project Open Hand in 2004 after 10 years working as a sign-language interpreter in the San Francisco public school system. He came to Project Open Hand because he wanted to work with adults in a public-service setting, especially those who were diagnosed with HIV.

"I knew the world of gay men living with HIV," Joe said. "It was important for me to get involved in something HIV-related like Project Open Hand. It was a natural fit."

When he first started, his title was receptionist, which he describes as a hands-off approach in his interactions with clients. He would essentially greet them, hand them important paperwork, and make them feel comfortable.

Then when management wanted to increase client engagement, Joe finally was able to connect with Project Open Hand clients beyond his normal duties.

"My duties became very hands-on. I engage our clients. Not only do I try to connect clients to other services in Project Open Hand, I try to encourage clients to link up with each other," Joe said.

"I want them to create their own sense of community. Not eat dinner alone or lunch alone."

Every now and then, Joe would arrange to have lunch with clients, like cover-story client Vicky, at a Community Nutrition Program site.



"I picked up a friendship with Joe, and I've met a lot of nice people because of Joe. This community I'm a part of now, I met through Joe," Vicky said.

Although COVID drastically changed how clients and staff interacted, Joe was still connecting with clients who were sheltering in place by performing calls to check up on their status and find out if they needed help and Project Open Hand services.

Why does Joe go the extra step to connect with clients?

"I love folks that are fighting for all the joy in life, like Vicky," Joe said. "It gives me a reason to want to be here. If you want to fight this hard, I'm going to fight with you. I'm going to be here when you go through it."

Although his "day job" as a client engagement specialist takes him away from his piano, he finds inspiration from the connections he's made with Project Open Hand clients.

When a former client passed away, Joe composed a song with a poem in honor of that client.

When asked if there was a particular poem he would compose to music for Vicky, he replied, "I haven't found the right poem yet that says what I want to say to Vicky. But I will."

And when he does, she will be the first one to hear it.

Connections like these between Joe and Vicky are only possible because of your help. Thank you for continuing to make these connections possible. To find out more or to read other stories like this, go to openhand.org/blog

by Marcus Tolero, Marketing and Communications Manager

What's Cookin' During the Holidays

The holiday season is nearly here and we've got a slate of activities for you.

- Hand to Hand - Our Annual Hand to Hand Luncheon is in December. Stay tuned!
- Help us reach our fundraising goal before the new year! Stay tuned for details.
- Giving Tuesday - Support *Meals with Love* to our clients on Giving Tuesday, November 30th, 2021



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 May 1, 2021 through July 31, 2021. If you have questions about this list, please contact donations@openhand.org or 415-447-2300.

DIAMOND CLUB \$100,000 and over

Bayer Fund
PLATINUM PLATE CLUB
\$50,000 - \$99,999

Delta Dental Community Care Foundation
GOLD PLATE CLUB
\$25,000 - \$49,999

Comcast NBCUniversal Foundation
MAC VIVA GLAM
Mary and Michael Osborn
Redwood Credit Union
Elizabeth Velarde*

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

Shabbir and Ashrafa Anik
Anonymous (1)
Estate of John Anzalone
Connie Ellerbach Charitable Fund
David Giltinan
John & Marcia Goldman Foundation
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
Hellman Foundation

Estate of Sylvester James
David R. Johnson
Lillian Lincoln Foundation

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

Anonymous (2)
Sharon Davidson*
Michael R. Hulton
The Humanist Fund
Salesforce.com

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

Donald and Joann Andrushko
Anonymous (1)
James Scott Bays
Barbara and Martin Cohen
Community Thrift Store
Susan M. and George L. Crow
FThree Foundation
Robert Grossman
Janine and Jon Miller
Helene Sanghvi York and Suketu Sanghvi
The Stewart and Montecalvo Charitable Fund
Marilyn Wolper

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

Anonymous (5)
Karin Ashley and Daniel Roth
Marian Beard and Daniel Wehmeier
Sheila Brady
Richard Cald
Judy Chang
Chevron Matching Employee Fund
Marsha Cohen and Robert Feyer
Dorene Cotter and Anthony Nash
Jerome and Thao Dodson
Helen Embree
Equator Coffees and Teas
Paul Feuerwerker
George Fisher
Curt Parker and Jerry Francone
Diane Freeman
Kathy and James Guthrie
Betty Hoener
Huberman Charitable Fund
Jeff Jackson and Maurice Monette
Estate of Sylvester James
Janet and Robert Johnson
Elizabeth and Thomas Jones III
James Kenney*

Mamie Kiyohara
Sophie and Phurpa Ladenla
Mary and Eric Lindquist
Bruce MacKenzie
Preston Maring, MD
The Marshall Kirk McKusick and
Eric P. Allman Foundation
McLeod Family
Angelo Meola
Russell Nelson
Robert Page Jr.
Barbara Poole*
Premium Port Wines
Dr. Jurate Raulinaitis and Dr. Kirk Schneider
Jackie Relaford
Judith Rosenberg and Alan Fried
Ronald Saturno
Richard Simpson and Ann Reisenauer
The Sternfeld Fund
The Stoper Family Charitable Fund
Tomda Fund
Vionic Group LLC
Sheila and Robert Weisblatt*
Sophia Yang
Sharon and Olujimi Yoloye
Mrs. Jane Zaloudek and Dr. Charles Zaloudek



* Designates members of The Supper Club, Project Open Hand's monthly giving program. To learn more about The Supper Club, visit: www.openhand.org/give/supper-club.



From Our
Kitchen
to Yours

Zucchini Bread

Prep Time: **15 minutes** Ready in: **60 Minutes** Yields: **1 Loaf (12 slices)**

Ingredients

- 1 egg
 - 1 cup sugar
 - ½ cup vegetable oil
 - 1 cup flour (all purpose or whole wheat)
 - 1 teaspoon baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla
 - ½ cup raisins
 - 1 cup yellow squash or zucchini, shredded

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease a bread loaf pan.
2. In a large bowl, mix eggs, sugar, and oil together.
3. Add flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, vanilla, and raisins.
4. Stir in the squash and mix well.
5. Pour batter into pan.
6. Bake for 40 minutes, or until a toothpick or fork inserted into the center comes out clean.





Project Open Hand
meals with love

THANK YOU
DINING OUT FOR LIFE!

Thank you to all our restaurant partners and diners who participated in Dining Out For Life East Bay on September 30th.

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!

Sponsored by

 DINING OUT FOR LIFE

 SUBARU Loves to Care

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

Project Open Hand
730 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109



MealTimes



Cover Story
Making A
Connection

Spotlight:
Inspired
PAGE 3

From Our Kitchen to Yours:
Zucchini Bread PAGE 4



