

MealTimes



Spotlight On

Jedi the Driver: Project Open Hand's Action Figure

Jedi has been delivering meals
for Project Open Hand since 2003

The force has always been strong with this one. Because you don't get a nickname like "Jedi" by accident. It must be earned.

In his 15-plus years as a driver with Project Open Hand, Alfred "Jedi" Kessel has delivered well over 100,000 *meals with love* to critically ill neighbors and seniors in San Francisco - including his mother, Consuilo Navarro.

"She had the whole package - diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, Parkinson's...we delivered medically tailored, diabetic meals to my mom every week. She loved it, too," says Jedi, with a wide, prideful smile that quickly dissipates into the space between thoughts.

As every true Jedi learns, the force is a balance of both darkness

and light. And it has been a dark time for Jedi. While still mourning the passing of his mother, Jedi and his family faced another tragedy when his grandson, Kooder, whom

who remembers praying that same morning for his nephew at the Catholic Church next door to a Project Open Hand Community Nutrition Program site where he

"I'm in 15 straight years of delivering meals. It feels like over a million miles. That's like a galaxy far, far away."

—JEDI

Jedi raised and who sometimes volunteered at Project Open Hand, was gunned down in an act of senseless violence earlier this year in the Sunset.

"I still blame myself," says Jedi,

had just delivered warm, nutritious meals to seniors and adults with disabilities on Fifth Avenue. "I should have prayed harder."

Continuing the Project Open Hand mission of delivering *meals*

with love to the critically ill is what keeps Jedi and his delivery team grounded, says Distribution Manager Scott Yowell.

"When Jedi shows up, the energy shifts. And the fun begins," says Scott. "Taking care of his mother for as long as he did is why Jedi excels at his job. He sees his mother in so many of our clients. This job saves him in that it lets him keep doing his life's work - to help others."

How did you earn the name Jedi?

In 1977, when Star Wars came out, I was a 10th grader at McAteer. I saw lines spinning around the Coronet. When I heard Han Solo say my last name ("the Kessel run in less than 12 parsecs...") I turned to my friend and said, "Did you hear that?" Right then

(Continued on page 2)

I knew I was born to be a Star Wars fan. Back then you could hide in the theater’s bathroom and see it over and over again.

What is your biggest extravagance?

Shopping for Star Wars toys. And bowling. I just got the new Hammer Black Widow Legend ball. Expensive but worth it. The way the back end finds the pocket. It just explodes. I’m

on the POH bowling team. My best score is a 290, but I predict this is the year for a perfect game.

What is the trait in yourself that you most deplore?

I don’t like the way I wear my emotions on my sleeves.

Delfin Vigil, Director of Communications



Jedi shows off his tattoo in memory of his mother, Consuilo. Jedi says his greatest fear has already happened: losing the last two people he loves.



Mark’s Letter

\$6M for California’s Critically Ill

At Project Open Hand, we believe that food is love and food is medicine. It’s the common denominator that brought together a force of nutrition service providers, state legislators and medical researchers - all at the ready to advocate for the most vulnerable members of our community. And that force is being felt

here in California. This summer, Governor Jerry Brown approved a \$6 million innovative healthy food pilot project for low-income Californians struggling with chronic illness. The Food Is Medicine-based program will be implemented over a three-year pilot period supporting a Food Is Medicine Coalition that includes Project Open Hand in San Francisco, Ceres Community Project

and Food For Thought in the North Bay Area, Health Trust in San Jose, Project Angel Food in Los Angeles and Mama’s Kitchen in San Diego. The pilot program will debut at hospitals, doctors’ offices and clinics in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland and parts of Sonoma and Marin counties. It will target locations with a large number of patients whose frequent hospitalizations are preventable. The Food is Medicine-based program drew staunch support from State Assemblymembers Phil Ting and David Chiu and State Senator Mike McGuire, among others. And it’s expected to save taxpayers millions. The Project Open Hand model works. Hilary Seligman, MD-PhD, UCSF Global Health Sciences, says, “Not only do these meals nourish, but they also hold promise for keeping people out of the hospital, preventing health crises, and allowing people to maintain independence at home.” The Project Open Hand model works. And we’re excited to bring this new project to more folks living throughout California.



Mark Ryle (right) poses in Sacramento with representatives of like-nonprofits that will also be participating in the pilot program.

Mark Ryle, LCSW, Chief Executive Officer

From the Archives

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month and we are reflecting on June 2005, when AVON Foundation Breast Cancer Crusade expanded our partnership through its first \$100,000 grant to Project Open Hand!

Project Open Hand has been serving breast cancer clients like Gerry (below) since 2000



Photography by Brenton Gieser (Jedi)

Project Open Hand
openhand.org

Project Open Hand’s mission is to nourish and engage our community by providing meals with love to the sick and the elderly. MealTimes is published quarterly for the friends and clients of Project Open Hand.

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Community

Meet Marty: The Story of a Social Moth

As he declares so enthusiastically upon meeting someone, Project Open Hand client Richard prefers to go by Marty. A Cincinnati native, Marty found himself visiting San Francisco 50 years ago and immediately falling in love with the city.

“When I saw the topography of San Francisco as I was flying in, I said, ‘This is it. I’m going to be here now.’ And that’s the type of person I am. When I set my mind to something, I usually try to do it,” Marty says over his usual cup of coffee at the Curry Senior Center, the busiest dining hall included in Project Open Hand’s Community Nutrition Program. The food has been a wonderful supplement to Marty’s diet, as he tends to a variety of health issues, including COPD.

With family still in Ohio, Marty liquidated everything he owned and headed where he knew he belonged: out West. His true livelihood was owning and operating The Town Squire, a clothing store on Polk Street.

Marty ignites inside when he speaks of the store, and freely throws around words and phrases like “outrageous” and “forward thinking.” He describes moments of celebrity visits, including Michael Douglas, Brenda Vaccaro, and Mitzi Gaynor. Make no mistake,

Marty isn’t bragging, sounding just as shocked today as he retells stories from decades past. He smiles so large it makes his eyes nearly undetectable, and he adds, “It was fun. I got to meet a lot of nice people.”

But like most living in the dream city of San Francisco, it doesn’t come without a cost. The property he rented for the store was sold and the new owner raised the rent, six times the cost.

“I just couldn’t afford it,” Marty says, sounding disappointed but not at all defeated.

Marty currently resides in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood, but spent 18 years living downtown, on Kearny Street. That’s when Marty took another hard hit.

“They found lead and asbestos in the place and we had to relocate



Marty happily smiles for a camera in between sips of coffee at the Curry Senior Center.

Despite Marty’s weighty setbacks, his light-hearted nature screams resilience, and he pledges

converse and discuss the daily happenings, and it’s nice because when you become a senior, you don’t get to see people as much as you’d like to. I’ve met several nice people, and sometimes we’ll arrange meet-ups, like at the Cadillac Hotel, where they have free music once a month and a big grand piano in their lobby. It’s nice to not live in isolation. I used to be a social butterfly, but now I’m just sort of a social moth.”

Marty bashfully laughs, and concludes, “I found comradery here.”

Tara Blake, Marketing Communications Officer

“I come to the Curry Senior Center for the socialization, really. I found comradery here.”

–MARTY

for what was supposed to be 90 days. I got a call three-and-a-half years later declaring my apartment was ready for me again, but they raised the rent astronomically. I just couldn’t afford it.”

an eternal love for The City. Marty brings his mind back to the Curry center and his coffee.

“I come here for the socialization, really. Usually, I sit with the same group every day. We



Project Open Hand Plate Clubs

Every gift makes a difference. In each issue of MealTimes, we give special acknowledgements to our supporters who have given a total of \$1,000 or more during the previous quarter (April 1, 2017 to June 30, 2017). Your generosity enables us to provide nourishing food to so many of our neighbors. If you have questions about this list, please contact David Newcomb, Director of Advancement and Community Relations, at dnewcomb@openhand.org or (415) 447-2417.

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From Our Kitchen to Yours

Sweet Potato Hash

Ingredients

2 large sweet potatoes, peeled & cut in 1-inch cubes
6 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1/2 red onion, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1/4 cup green onions

Serves 4-6

2 cloves garlic, chopped
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Add potatoes to large saucepan of salted, boiling water and simmer until tender; drain and dry completely
2. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat
3. Add red onions, bell peppers, green onions, and garlic; saute until tender and lightly golden, 5-6 minutes
4. Season vegetables with salt and pepper, then transfer to a bowl
5. Add remaining 4 tablespoons oil to skillet, then add the drained and dried sweet potatoes
6. Cook in a single layer on medium heat, stirring occasionally, until tender, approximately 6 minutes
7. Increase heat to high and cook, without stirring, until potatoes are golden and crisp, about 2 more minutes
8. Sprinkle with smoked paprika, and gently stir in veggies and parsley




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**Jedi the Driver:
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