

Mealtimes



Cover Story

A Family Affair



When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the world, Gelmy, her husband, and their three children (ages ten, five, and four at the time) stayed inside like many others.

She and her husband had both lost their jobs, but they worked hard to ensure that meals stayed on the table, homework was done, and everyone stayed safe and healthy. Living in a small apartment with a family of five, Gelmy describes the times as being one of “confinement.”

“I cooked a lot at home,” she recalls. At the time, networks of support centers like pop-up pantries across the Bay served people who had lost food access. “Support centers gave away a lot of potatoes then,” Gelmy continues. “I didn’t want to waste them, so I was making French fries every day.”

Gelmy, whose first language is Spanish, recently enrolled in ESL courses to improve her English. She is sharing her story with Project Open Hand bilingual Wellness Program Coordinator, William, who is translating in real-time at a meeting room in our San Francisco Grocery Center.

“My cooking was very unhealthy,” Gelmy says. She sits calmly drinking a glass of water while she talks, pausing occasionally before sharing a vulnerable part of her story.

“Coming from a place where healthy eating is not practiced, it’s hard to give up those habits. But now I’m doing the best I can for my kids – to make sure they can live long and healthy lives,” she says, smiling. When Gelmy talks about her children, her face lights up.

Gelmy didn’t know it during the pandemic, but a lack of healthy eating was a major contributing factor to her uncontrolled diabetes – a disease which makes her vision blurry, fatigue worse, and thirst unbearable.

To juggle her responsibilities and maintain an active presence in her children’s school and extracurricular activities, she skipped meals, ate late, and did not eat nutrient-rich foods.

During her second pregnancy, Gelmy learned she had gestational diabetes, which occurs during pregnancy if the body cannot produce or use insulin effectively, and usually resolves after pregnancy. But when it reappeared during her third pregnancy, she was diagnosed with prediabetes.

By 2019, she had diabetes. One night, a high fever coupled with other symptoms sent Gelmy to the hospital.

“I wasn’t feeling well at all. My blood sugar levels were very high because I

Clients receive weekly fresh produce – greens, fruits, vegetables like carrots, garlic, whole grains – and lean meats to help them stay in control of their health.

Gelmy says she looks forward to seeing the mobile van, where she can always find a friendly face. Currently, Project Open Hand has three locations throughout San Francisco where clients can find the van and pick up their groceries.

Her A1C levels have dropped, and that, Gelmy says, makes a big difference.

“I know that food is medicine because I notice the difference when I eat healthy and when I don’t. When I don’t, I end up in the hospital,” she says. “But to be honest, I’m more focused on my kids. This program has also helped my children, too. Because now, when I cook, I can make healthy meals for all of us.”

Gelmy is always taking home new ingredients from the van, and she has even attended nutrition demonstrations, like cooking with tofu. She says one of her favorite dishes she makes, inspired by her new healthy eating habits, is cauliflower dipped in egg.

“And my children like the dishes I make. They really like the produce I bring home,” she says, laughing. “My youngest daughter looks like a bunny when she snacks on the celery from the mobile van.”

Thanks to our cutting-edge medical nutrition interventions and healthy produce, Project Open Hand clients have lower rates of hospital readmissions, shorter hospital stays, and overall improvements in their health. That’s only possible because of you.

To support more clients like Gelmy, make a donation at www.openhand.org/donate.

"Being a mother, it's hard to follow a doctor's advice because you put your kids first."

wasn’t eating properly, and I wasn’t on medication.”

At the hospital, she checked off nearly every symptom on the patient admission sheet.

After prescribing medication, the hospital doctor sent her to a registered dietitian to stress the importance of healthy eating. They referred her to Project Open Hand.

“I blamed myself,” says Gelmy. “Most days I would go without eating or eat very late, which would upset my blood sugar.”

“But I don’t want my kids to go through what I’m going through. Being a mother, it’s hard to follow a doctor’s advice because you put your kids first,” she continues, “so I knew I had to make a change.”

Now, she receives her groceries every week at Project Open Hand’s mobile location in the Mission. The groceries feed her and the whole family.

by Kimberly Kollwitz, Manager, Marketing and Communication



Paul's Letter: Paying It Forward

Dear Friend,

Did you know that legacy giving has been a vital part of Project Open Hand's success since our founding 40 years ago? Planned gifts received decades ago continue to feed our clients today.

In this edition of MealTimes, you'll read about a very special donor, Thomas Nicoll, who left a gift in his will to Project Open Hand.

Although Tom was not a large donor to us during his lifetime (his gifts averaged about \$100 a year), his legacy gift will impact the lives of many people for years to come.

These gifts are a lifeline for people like Gelmy – who is featured in the cover story – a mother of three who has been receiving Project Open Hand's services for the last few years.

Gelmy, who puts her children first in every aspect of her life, has seen a massive improvement in her and

her family's health since joining our program.

Many of our legacy members had friends and family who directly benefited from our services over the years.

Their special support is a testament to the impact of our work, the compassion and strength of our founder Ruth Brinker, and we hope you'll help create your own legacy.

In the last 40 years, Project Open Hand has weathered two pandemics and several other disasters, but we remain standing because of your continued support.

When I think about the enormous impact of legacy giving, I'm reminded of a quote from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

To that I would add: How can you keep 'doing for others' even after you

are gone?

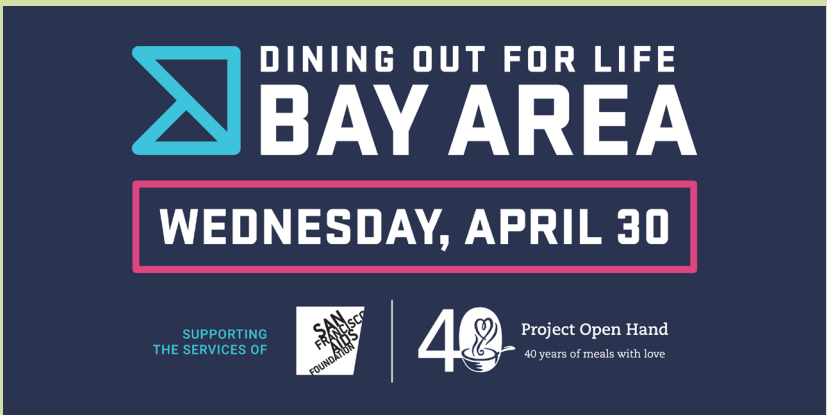
While less than 25% of our funding comes from federal sources, we face uncertainty about how funding may change with this administration.

That's why your gift, whether it's one-time, monthly, from your Donor Advised Fund, or from your will, is more important now than ever.

Any amount is meaningful.

Our stoves are on – and they will be for the next 40 years. You help make that possible. Thank you for your continued support!

Paul Hepfer
Chief Executive Officer



Dining Out For Life Bay Area: Wednesday, April 30

We're excited to announce that we will be hosting our annual Dining Out For Life event in partnership with San Francisco AIDS Foundation! This means **your support on April 30** will go twice as far, and you'll be able to dine in both San Francisco and the East Bay. Proceeds will benefit both organizations, who serve over 36,000 clients annually across the Bay Area.

Learn more: diningoutforlife.com/bayarea

A Note on Federal Funding

As the story on federal funding continues to develop, some donors have asked if any changes could impact Project Open Hand's services. Fortunately, federal and state funds are just a small portion of our overall operating budget – less than 25% in FY 2024.

Here's what we know at the moment: Thus far we do not anticipate any disruptions in our funding, and we will continue providing our services without disruption.

We don't know what will happen in the future, and there may be a point where the need for our services becomes more critical. As things become clearer in the coming months, we may come back to you for support. But for now, we will continue to watch carefully and keep you updated as we learn more.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to our team by contacting Mario Lemos, Senior Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving, at mlemos@openhand.org. Thank you!

Quarterly News from Project Open Hand | Published Since 1989

Issue No. 136



Project Open Hand
40 years of meals with love

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



Spotlight: Thomas Nicoll’s Lasting Impact

Legacy giving is a powerful way to support Project Open Hand. Through a gift in your will, your contribution will make a lasting impact on the future of the organization.

That’s exactly what Thomas Nicoll, a long-time donor and admirer of Project Open Hand, did.

Tom was a retail display designer. He and his lifelong partner, Kerwin, met at a party and moved to San Francisco in 1971. Just four years after Project Open Hand was founded by Ruth Brinker in her kitchen, Tom became a donor.

He had many friends who benefited from the services of Project Open Hand. Tom deeply believed in our mission of providing meals with love to those who need them most.

As a dedicated donor, Tom gave for years to the organization.

David Hale, a close friend of Tom’s recalls his dedication: “Tom knew that a lot of people were being supported and assisted by Project Open Hand’s work.”

"It's something we hear a lot from our donors," says Mario Lemos, Senior Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving. "We rely on the generosity of people to keep doing this important work. Every dollar counts."

Last January, Tom passed away, leaving a portion of his estate to Project Open Hand and a few other local nonprofits.

“Donations like these, which are so incredibly generous, are a way to ensure that someone’s legacy continues to support the organizations they care about,” says Mario.

“We are indebted to donors like Tom who have included us in their estate. To know that in perpetuity your gift will continue to keep our doors open is amazing.”

Your legacy helps to sustain our work. Whether you were a volunteer, a client, or a long-time admirer of the organization,

legacy gifts like Tom’s are a way to reflect the impact Project Open Hand had on you.

Legacy Giving

Legacy giving can be in any amount – and it doesn’t necessarily have to be a large sum of money.

Most donors like Tom leave a fixed amount or a percent of their estate to benefit Project Open Hand. But that’s not the only way to support our work – you can gift stocks, bonds, real estate, and property, too.

Planning for the future of our organization is crucial, and our work can continue only because of the generosity of individuals like Tom.

If you too are interested in making a lasting impact, join our Legacy Giving Circle by letting us know you’ve included Project Open Hand with a gift in your will. Your gift will support our mission that you care so much about in perpetuity.

Your Gift Matters

Make a big impact with a future gift! When you include Project Open Hand in your estate plan, your generosity provides nutritious meals to people who are sick and vulnerable.

If Project Open Hand has left its mark on you, please consider including us in your estate plans. To learn more about how you can make a difference, contact Mario Lemos, Senior Director of Major Gifts and Planned Giving at mlemos@openhand.org or (415) 447-2465. Learn more at www.openhand.mylegacygift.org.



by Kimberly Kollwitz, Manager, Marketing and Communications



Project Open Hand Plate Clubs

Make a difference. *MealTimes* offers special acknowledgment to Project Open Hand supporters who have made gifts totaling \$1,000 or more from October 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024. If you have questions about this list, please contact donations@openhand.org or 415-447-2300.

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Black Bean Brownie

These are not your traditional brownies. High in fiber and protein, black beans create a delicious gluten-free, low-carb dessert packed with iron, calcium, and potassium.

Ingredients

Yields 10 servings

- 16 oz or 2 cups of cooked black beans
 - 2 eggs
 - 1/4 cup vegetable oil
 - 2 tsp pure vanilla extract
 - 3 tbs brewed coffee (decaf is fine)
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
 - 1/2 tsp baking soda
 - 1/4 tsp salt
 - 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
 - Chocolate chips/chocolate pieces (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 325°F and line an 8” baking pan with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Mash the beans with a fork or potato masher until smooth.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs with a fork, then combine with the coffee and vanilla. Add this wet mixture into the mashed beans, and combine until smooth.
4. In a large bowl, whisk the cocoa powder, baking soda, salt, and brown sugar, to combine.
5. Create a well in the center of the cocoa powder mixture and add the pureed bean mixture, then mix till well-combined.
6. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking pan and spread into an even layer.
7. Add the (optional) chocolate chips/chocolate pieces on top of the batter, then bake for 25 minutes.
8. Remove the pan from the oven, but let it cool until no longer hot to the touch.

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MealTimes



Cover Story

A Family Affair



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