Quarterly News from Project Open Hand | *Published Since 1989*

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MealTimes



Cover Story

Project Open Hand's 30 Millionth Meal

On a breezy and overcast day in San Francisco, a very special volunteer delivers Project Open Hand's 30 millionth meal.

Gathered on the sidewalk of an apartment complex in the Castro are news cameras, Project Open Hand supporters, and community members – including a few folks on nearby balconies, watching to see what's happening on the sidewalk below.

Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi is carrying a canvas tote that reads "30 MILLIONTH MEAL" down the sidewalk. Inside the tote she carries are two seven-packs of Project Open Hand vegetarian meals and a week's worth of fresh produce.

Nicholas receives a Project Open Hand delivery each week. A U.S. army veteran living with HIV and a client since 2020, he started receiving meals from Project Open Hand at one of the lowest points of his life. At the time, he was laid off from his career as a substance abuse counselor due to the pandemic.

He struggled with homelessness, sobriety, and health. He checked himself into rehabilitation to stop the spiral – but when he was out, affording good, healthy food that would support his health, his HIV, and his recovery, became a new challenge. That's when he turned to Project Open Hand.

"I'm doing great now," Nicholas says. "When I went to Project Open Hand, I didn't have anywhere else to go. I wouldn't be here now without them. I'm in grad school now, about to start my internship. It's because they helped me that I can now help other people."

At a press conference after the event, Speaker Emerita Pelosi joins Nicholas and other Project Open Hand leadership at a podium and speaks to the news crews present: "Thank you, Project Open Hand," she says, "for not only what you've done for the community and the people in it – and beyond – but for the example that you've set for the country."

"When I went to Project Open Hand, I didn't have anywhere else to go. I wouldn't be here now without them."

When Ruth Brinker founded Project Open Hand in 1985, she built the organization on the dream that no one would have to suffer through one of the most difficult parts of their life alone. It means serving more than just meals; it means serving *meals with love* to our community.

Today, Nicholas is sober, and healthier than ever. He's in school for his Master's degree in Social Work, and is an active advocate for homeless youth and the LGBTQ+ community. He credits that, in part, to Project Open Hand.

"Things got really dire," he says. "It's taken a lot to get to where I am today, but I don't know where I'd be without Project Open Hand," he says. "Without these meals, I'd definitely be in survival mode. It gives me peace of mind that I'm going to be OK."

It takes a lot to make 30 million meals possible: 30 million meals is 30 million touch points with our clients, and 30 million opportunities for nutrition and nutrition services. It's also 30 million times our volunteers and community made a meal possible. 30 million times their support said to someone: "It's going to be okay, we've got you."

30 million meals does not happen alone. Many clients like Nicholas depend on medically tailored meals and groceries to support their health at one of the toughest times in their lives. Every single meal and grocery bag is possible because of Project Open Hand supporters – and the 30 millionth meal delivery was no different.

Thank you for making this delivery, and the next 30 million meals, possible.

by Kimberly Kollwitz, Director of Communications and Government Affairs

Letter from our CEO

Dear Friend,

We recently celebrated a historic milestone at Project Open Hand—the delivery of our 30 millionth meal. This special meal was presented to client Nicholas by Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, one of Project Open Hand's longest-standing advocates. Throughout her career, she has championed HIV/AIDS care and nutrition programs, as well as secured millions of dollars in federal funding for our organization. We are incredibly fortunate to have her in our corner.

It is through acts of service like hers—and the kind-hearted generosity of community members like you—that turned 30 million meals into reality. Whether you volunteer, donate, or spread the word about Project Open Hand's mission, your support has brought us to this extraordinary milestone and will ensure that we provide nutritious meals for years to come. Milestones like this serve as a time to reflect not only on what we've accomplished together, but what we envision Project Open Hand will be for those who turn to us for support in the future.

One of the most meaningful ways to aid the future of our organization is through a legacy gift. In this edition of Mealtimes, you'll meet Sarita Groisser, a lifelong volunteer and donor who began delivering meals in 1991.

When she drafted her estate plan in 2015, she included Project Open Hand as a beneficiary: "What matters most to me is that I'm contributing to an organization working to make the world a better and more just place, both while I am here, and once I'm gone," Sarita shared. Her words and generosity reflect her lifetime of compassion and remind me what legacy is all about. It's not the size of a gift that matters, but the lives it touches and the hope it creates for others.

We made it to 30 million meals thanks to supporters like you, who are determined to improve the lives of those in need of nutrition.

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we'll reach the next 30 millionth meal milestone–and more!

With gratitude,

Paul Hepfer
Chief Executive Officer



Upcoming Events

Hand to Hand Gala:
Friday, September 18

Join us for our biggest fundraiser of the year—an unforgettable evening of great food, champagne, community celebration, and exciting auctions, all in support of our mission.

Interested in sponsorship opportunities?
Reach out to our team at **events@openhand.org**

For more information or to purchase tickets for this event, visit our website at www.give.gofundme.com/h2h26

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Project Open Hand
meals with love

At Project Open Hand we believe in the healing power of nutrition. Medically tailored nutrition is essential in addressing illness, supporting aging with dignity, and reducing social disparities.

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Kimberly Kollwitz, *Director of Communications and Government Affairs*

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FOOD = LOVE

Community

While I Am Here, and Once I'm Gone: Legacy Giving at Project Open Hand

Sarita Groisser moved to San Francisco from Massachusetts after college in 1982, with a duffel bag and a sense of adventure. She has called San Francisco home ever since.

Groisser became involved with Project Open Hand in its earlier years, doing volunteer meal delivery beginning in 1991. She was moved, challenged, and inspired by doing delivery to SROs, witnessing firsthand the impact medically tailored meals and personal interaction had with mostly men suffering the ravages of HIV/AIDS. Later, she became a regular "grocery center" volunteer for many years.

"I have such wonderful memories of the people I met through volunteering with Project Open Hand: other volunteers, staff, and the clients," Groisser said. "It made such an impact on me. I felt compelled to give back and to help where I could."

Giving back comes as second nature to Groisser. She has been working in the San Francisco public schools for her entire career, starting as a classroom teacher of recently arrived Spanish-speaking immigrants, before specializing in



assessing students with learning differences. For the past 25 years, Groisser has collaborated with School Psychologists in helping to evaluate and make recommendations for children of all ages, skills, and backgrounds.

"I am in such a lucky position to be able to help others. And, it's so important to recognize and address the inequalities in our society," Groisser said.

Groisser's financial commitment to Project Open Hand was cemented in June 2015, when a close friend of hers helped to draft her will. It was then that she designated Project Open Hand as a beneficiary of her estate, thereby joining our Ruth Brinker Legacy Society and ensuring the longevity of our organization.

"What I want people to remember about me is that I cared about others. So, how do you show that?" Groisser said of her decision to make a planned gift to Project Open Hand. "All I have are my ethics and how to best carry them forward, and it was important to me to give to organizations that represent my values. What matters most to me is that I'm contributing to organizations working to make the world a better and more just place, both while I am here, and once I'm gone."

We at Project Open Hand are incredibly grateful to Sarita for her lifetime of support and for making us a beneficiary of her estate.

If you would like to learn more about our legacy giving options, please reach out to Mario Lemos at (415) 447-2465 or mlemos@openhand.org.

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 January 1, 2026 through March 31, 2026. If you have questions about this list, please contact donations@openhand.org or 415-447-2300.

DIAMOND PLATE CLUB
$100,000 AND ABOVE

Gilead Foundation
Estate of James Guthrie

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$25,000 - $49,999

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Zing - Wellness Wednesday Community

* Designates members of The Supper Club, Project Open Hand's monthly giving program.

To Learn more about The Supper Club at:
www.**openhand.org/give/supper-club**



Tomatillo Salsa

Ingredients

- 8-10 green tomatillos
- 1 medium chili: arbol (spicy), California (not spicy), jalapeno
- 1-2 garlic cloves (optional)
- 4 - 6 oz water
- salt, to taste
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1/2 cup white onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup cilantro, finely chopped

Directions

1. Remove tomatillo husks and rinse any sticky residue.
2. Cook the tomatillos in one of the following ways:

   (A) Boiling: Place tomatillos and chili pepper in a saucepan, cover with water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon.

   (B) Sauté pan: Coat a skillet with a teaspoon of olive oil. On high heat, place the tomatillos in the pan and cook until brown. Flip over and sear on the other side.

   (C) Roasting: Place tomatillos, chili pepper, and unpeeled garlic (if using), on a pan and roast for 10-40 minutes.

   (D) Microwave: Place tomatillos and chili pepper in a microwave safe bowl. Cook for 4 minutes. Use oven mitt to remove the bowl from the microwave.
3. Add cooked tomatillos, chilis, and unpeeled garlic (if using), water, and salt to a blender and pulse until smooth.
4. Add chopped white onion and cilantro. Stir to combine.

Enjoy on top of eggs, rice bowls, with chips or vegetables!

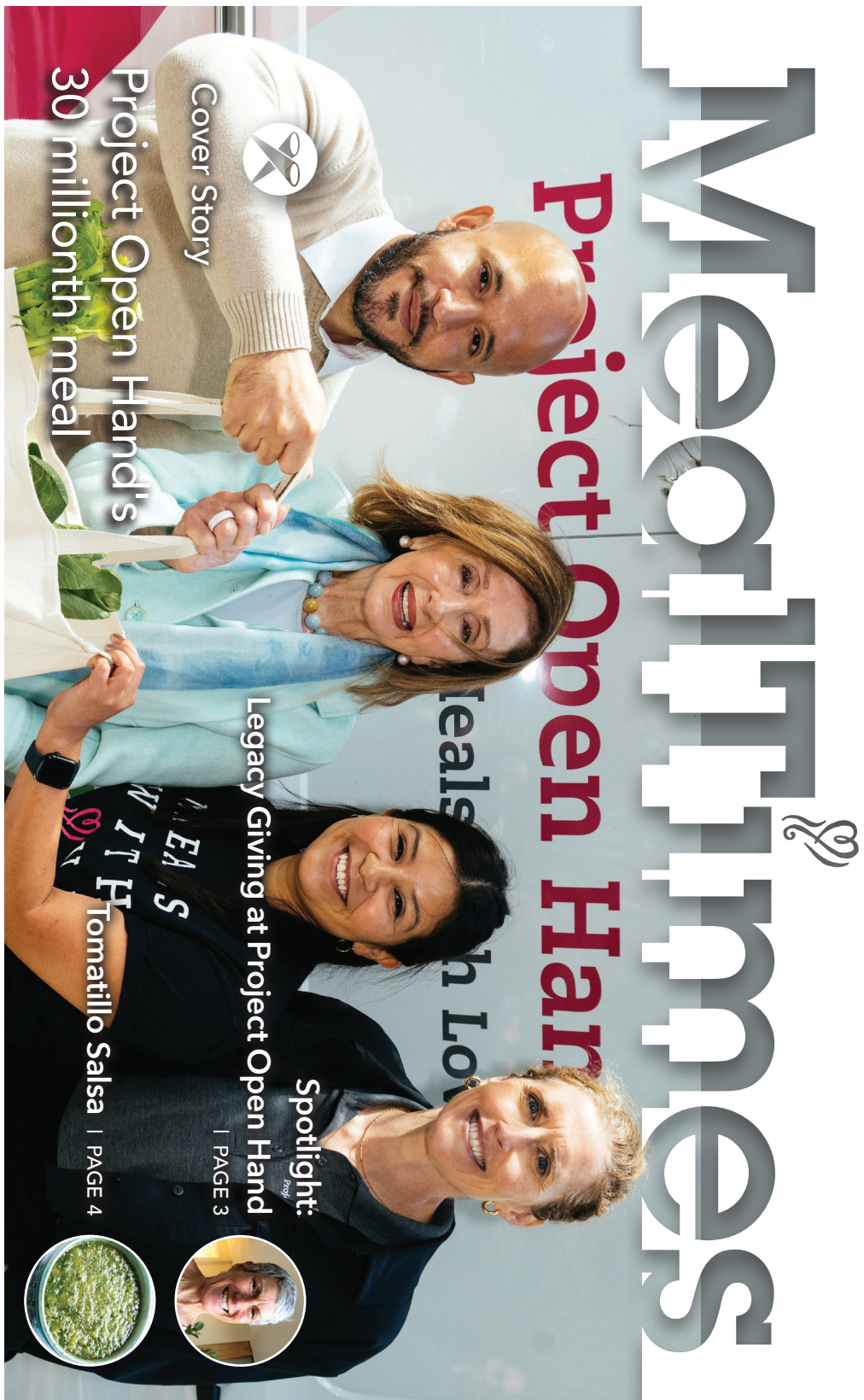
The Supper Club

Monthly Gifts Make a Difference



When you join The Supper Club, Project Open Hand's monthly giving community, you'll receive special invitations to members-only activities, exclusive insider access, and more. Your monthly gifts ensure we can get nutritious meals into the hands of those who need it most. Become a member today.

To learn more, scan the QR code or visit
www.openhand.org/supperclub



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