When you approach 1921 San Pablo Avenue in Uptown Oakland, you’d think you’re visiting a chic boutique shop. Indoor plants and succulents line the windowsills of its two large windows. The entrance door appears to be dated to another time in Oakland’s architectural past.

But appearances are just that—appearances. Because inside this 2,200 square-foot space, nestled in between two store fronts, is Project Open Hand’s East Bay Office and Grocery Center, humming with activity. Clients are shopping for their groceries. Meal deliveries are being coordinated. Registered dietitian nutritionists are conducting in-person and virtual meetings with clients.

Clients are shopping for their groceries. Meal deliveries are being coordinated. Registered dietitian nutritionists are conducting in-person and virtual meetings with clients.

Project Open Hand, which started providing services to East Bay clients since 1989, has now become the largest medical nutrition provider in Alameda County, serving 245 clients weekly with meals and groceries and making more than 170 deliveries per week in communities like Oakland, Berkeley, Hayward, and Alameda.

While services must expand to meet the needs of Alameda County Clients, the small building we operate out of has not experienced the same growth. Improvements are needed to enhance the client experience. And hopefully, that will all change soon!

Last year, the office next door became empty and thus the opportunity to lease the space. The Executive Team and the property owner discussed options to design the space to fit our needs. If secured, the space would double in size to 4,400 square feet. And most importantly, it would improve the client experience with an expanded client and grocery center to increase distribution and operational capacity.

Currently, 1,227 meals are distributed weekly out of the Oakland location.

“Project Open Hand San Francisco has a community center where it’s like a beacon in the neighborhood. It’s a place where you can come and speak with staff in a confidential space. During non-pandemic times, food demos and classes really enhance the client experience. That has been limited in Alameda County,” Ana Ayala, Vice President of Programs said.

“How in Oakland, we don’t really have the same community center due to space limitations. We have a tiny lobby where people come in and check in. They can chat with someone, but it’s not the same experience. It’s our responsibility to make sure all our clients receive the same level of services,” she said.

The new space will also help improve the experience for staff members and volunteers. Currently there is no break room for the 8 to 12 staff and volunteers to enjoy their lunch.

“The expansion will improve the volunteer experience and ensures the community can connect with our mission and our service model”

-Ana Ayala

There’s no private meeting space. With the expansion, staff will have dedicated cubicles for operations, additional meeting rooms, and improved infrastructure such as more permanent storage and refrigeration fixtures to make the space more useful and efficient.

“As a whole, spaces that had to pull double and triple duty can now be dedicated to a staff member,” Vice President of Operations, Jonathan Jump, said.

Although volunteer shifts are still limited due to COVID restrictions (two volunteers per day), the expansion will allow for more volunteer opportunities for supporters and corporate groups.

“In San Francisco, our building is a community space that draws volunteers. It resonates in the community at large as a space to be in, contribute to and participate in. It’s one of the more fun volunteer experiences because we created such a welcoming place.”

“In Alameda County however, we had to limit groups. The expansion will improve the volunteer experience and ensures the community can connect with our mission and our service model,” Ayala said.

We need your help. We can’t acquire the additional space for the Oakland Center without you. Will you help us offer an improved experience for our Alameda County clients and support all other Project Open Hand programs?

Please consider a donation at www.openhand.org/donate today! Thank you!

by Marcus Tolero, Marketing and Communications Manager
Paul’s Letter
A Special Message From Paul Hepfer

Dear Friend,

Did you know that Project Open Hand has been providing meals with love to Alameda County Residents since 1989? That’s over 30 years of making life-saving nutrition accessible to East Bay Community members who are battling critical illnesses like HIV/AIDS, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Did you know that our grocery center on 1921 San Pablo Avenue provides services to 245 clients on a weekly basis? Many of them visit our Oakland location to shop for groceries or meet with our registered dietitian nutritionists (RDN).

And while our staff and volunteers ensure our clients receive the best care and service, we want to improve and enhance our clients’ experience when they visit. We simply must do more for our East Bay clients. And that begins with making improvements to the current space. That’s where we need your help!

For years, our San Francisco location on 730 Polk Street has been a beacon for our clients. When they walk into the doors there, they get a more personalized experience because the space allows it.

Clients can meet with our RDNs in a private setting and there is ample room for them to move around and socialize with staff and volunteers. And when COVID restrictions are completely lifted, we can hold in-person cooking classes and demos once again.

You read in our cover story that we have an opportunity to expand our Oakland Office and Grocery Center. With that we can create an experience that better meets our clients’, staff and capacity needs.

It’s our responsibility to enhance the experience for our staff and volunteers, who are the backbone to our East Bay Operations. Additional space, infrastructure, and resources will not only improve service to our clients. It will also better equip our East Bay Team to exceed our clients’ needs, no matter where they are. In the case of Jenna Miles, our resident RDN in Oakland, she is conducting cooking classes virtually from her home kitchen to diabetes clients.

There’s an often-used phrase “that you make do with what you got.” Our team in Oakland has gone above and beyond to provide the best service possible to clients for over 30 years. Will you help make the Oakland expansion a reality? Thank you for your continued support.

Paul Hepfer
Chief Executive Officer

P.S. To support the Oakland Office and Grocery Center expansion and all other Project Open Hand programs, please go to www.openhand.org/donate. Thank you again.
Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Jenna Miles is hosting a cooking class for clients who are watching intently. She has a variety of vegetables on her cutting board including mushrooms, onions and red bell peppers.

She begins julienning the red bell pepper and explains to the audience what dish she is making and the nutritional value of each item on the cutting board.

Like any live cooking class, clients are encouraged to ask questions, which Jenna answers in-depth. It’s a unique opportunity for the viewer to interact with the host.

But this is not a normal cooking class. Jenna is teaching her class out of her home kitchen with a complete setup including lighting equipment, digital camera, and laptop.

And the clients are participating virtually through Zoom.

“Normally we would love to host a cooking class in-person with our clients. But due to COVID, we are always having to adjust to meet our clients’ needs and enhance their experience with us,” Miles said.

Project Open Hand plans to teach ten virtual cooking classes like these, spread out over the next few months. We partnered with the Alameda County Health Department (ACHD) to teach two classes to select participants; four to participants from Roots Community Health Center in Oakland, and four to Spanish-speaking participants from Alameda County’s Tiburcio Vazquez Health Center.

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 August 1, 2020 through July 31, 2021. If you have questions about this list, please contact donations@openhand.org or 415-447-2300.

Each class consists of ten participants. All of them are East Bay residents with diabetes. That’s why our classes are prepared with the goal of increasing their self-efficacy by cooking foods and meals that will help them manage their diabetes.

A different recipe is taught during each class. In addition to simply demonstrating how to cook a recipe, the ingredients are shipped to the participants’ homes. Our dietitians teach basic knife skills, and pertinent nutrition information about each ingredient, and how it will benefit their health.

Each class is one hour long and takes place over Zoom.

“These classes have improved the client experience in the East Bay by allowing people to stay safe at home during the pandemic, while still gaining valuable skills in cooking diabetes-friendly dishes. It also benefits our participants by providing them, for free, the ingredients to make these healthy recipes,” Miles said.

“I’ve received lots of positive feedback so far about how these classes have helped our participants increase their knowledge and understanding of nutrition for improved diabetes management.”

It appears that Jenna and the Nutrition Team have figured out a recipe for success in enhancing the client experience, virtually.

This is only possible because of your support. Thank you!

by Marcus Tolens, Marketing and Communications Manager

Community

Spotlight: Creating A Complete Virtual Cooking Experience

Gummerser Foundation
Michael Henry and Tyler Wuthmann
Preston Marion, MD
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CHINA PLATE CLUB
$1,000 - $2,499
61 Dukladar Street, LLC
Susan Adams
Alameda County Leather Corps
Clare and Kendall Alophin
Michael Andersen and Melanie Andersen
Anonymous (12)
Baker & Commons
Mario Batali

40k,000 - $59,999
John and Marcia Goldman Foundation
Estate of Sylvia (T) James
Holman Foundation
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GOLD PLATE CLUB
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Gap Foundation
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Estate of Elizabeth Engelcke
Terri Harnish
Estate of Nancy Vernon Burke
SILVER PLATE CLUB
$10,000 - $24,999
Anonymous (1)
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By Marcus Tolens, Marketing and Communications Manager

To learn more about The Supper Club, visit: www.openhand.org/give/supper-club.

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

Community
Cauliflower Mashed “Potatoes”

**NUTRITION per serving:** 96 calories, 3.8 g fat, 366 mg sodium, 14 g carbohydrate, 6.3 g fiber, 5.1 g protein.

**Ingredients**
- 1 medium (3 lb) head of cauliflower, trimmed & cut into florets
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- For garnish: chopped fresh thyme, extra virgin olive oil, freshly ground black pepper

**Instructions**
1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
2. Add the cauliflower & garlic and cook for about 10 minutes or until the cauliflower is fork tender.
3. Drain the cauliflower and garlic, return it back to the hot pan & let it stand for 2 to 3 minutes with the lid on.
4. Transfer the cauliflower & garlic to a food processor.
5. Add the olive oil, salt & pepper & purée until smooth. (You can also just use a potato masher or hand blender instead of a food processor). Adjust the salt and pepper to taste.
6. Garnish with chopped fresh thyme, salt, pepper, & a drizzle of olive oil.
7. Serve immediately, or store the cauliflower mashed “potatoes” in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.