

MealTimes



Cover Story

Rose's Story



Rose, a former nurse, believes her diabetes started with a lack of familiarity with healthy foods and cooking.

"I had all the education, but my upbringing on sugar and carbs shaped how I lived," she recalls.

At twenty-eight, Rose was working twelve-hour night shifts in an operating room at a busy trauma center, and she relied on quick, calorie-dense meals, such as milkshakes or bagels with cream cheese, honey and bacon, so that she'd have the energy to support her two kids and still have enough time to go to their PTA meetings at school.

"I got what was cheap and quick, and that habit stuck," says Rose. "I think that I thought I was immune to any of these diseases because of my medical background."

Now, many years later, Rose says she realizes the impact that eating like that had on her health. Today, Rose is living with diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol in a small, one room apartment in San Francisco.

She does not have a stove or an oven, nor does she have a space to store prepared, frozen meals. But she does have a microwave, and she recently acquired an induction plate and a pan to use with it, which has been a gamechanger for how she prepares food.

She relies heavily on the produce and recipes from the grocery centers at Project Open Hand. "I can make soup, now – and cook," says Rose, who didn't grow up eating or cooking fresh ingredients. But now, she enjoys it. "It

has changed my entire life."

She found Project Open Hand through a friend, who is a longtime client, after her doctor suggested she could benefit from a produce prescription program.

Developed in partnership with UC San Francisco, the produce prescription provides weekly grocery packages to clients that include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, lean meats, and herbs purchased from local farms and recommended by Project Open Hand dietitians.

Produce intake and its impact on the health of clients, like Rose, was then measured and evaluated on a regular basis by dietitians.

"It's incredible how food can change things."

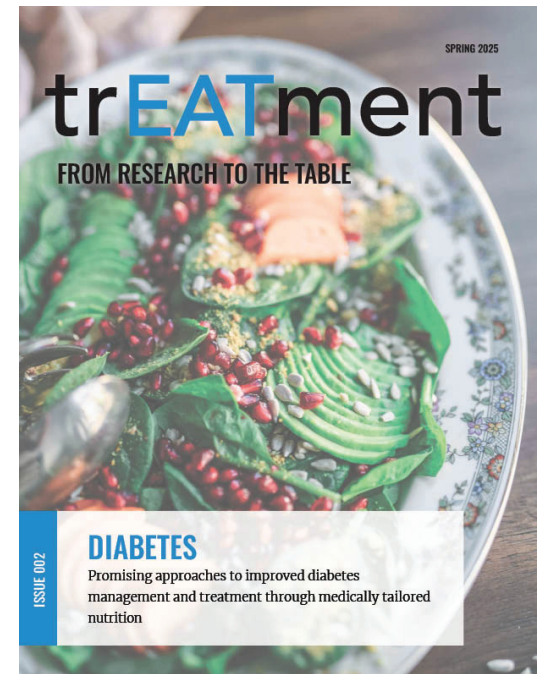
For Rose, cooking demonstrations and nutrition education have transformed her diet.

"I'm staying away from grapes, which I call 'little sugar bombs,' and choosing nectarines and plums from the Grocery Center instead." While all three of these fruits are sweet, the glycemic index of both plums and nectarines are lower than grapes. This makes a big difference for Rose, who regularly monitors her blood sugar.

"My blood sugar and A1C levels have dropped, which is amazing," she says.

"Project Open Hand has started me on this path of awareness about how I eat, and how that impacts me. I come here

once a week and get to make healthy choices."



This article originally appeared in Issue No. 2 of trEATment Magazine, a first-of-its-kind publication to educate and advocate for the national implementation of medically tailored meals.

In this issue, learn about the role that medically tailored nutrition can play in diabetes treatment and management.



Read more stories like Rose's by downloading a free digital copy of trEATment Magazine using the QR code.

by Kimberly Kollwitz, Manager, Marketing and Communication and Dani Janklow



Paul's Letter

In response to the proposed withholding of Dignity Fund money in San Francisco's upcoming budget—which will directly impact our Community Nutrition Program—Project Open Hand CEO Paul Hepfer sent the following letter to Mayor Daniel Lurie on June 5, 2025.

Dear Mayor Lurie,

Nonprofit organizations in San Francisco are bracing for some unprecedented and challenging times. As we continue to respond to community needs amid the financial realities we all face, we are mindful of the need for sustainable financial solutions that keep the essential safety net that tens of thousands of San Francisco residents depend upon for survival. Older adults and adults living with disabilities are among these.

The City's \$16 billion budget released on May 29, 2025 attempts to address the budget deficit of over \$780 million—all while addressing your priorities of cleaner and safer streets, an enormous challenge to be sure. However, within this budget, you are withholding \$3 million of "Dignity Fund dollars" from the Department of Aging Services (DAS), intended to support nutrition services for older adults and people living with disabilities.

Project Open Hand (POH) is now faced with a reduction in DAS funding that will impact services to our Community Nutrition Program. Specifically, for the contract period starting July 1, 2025, this funding reduction will mean providing 100,000 fewer meals. As a result, weekend meal service will be eliminated at all our meal sites, leaving thousands of older adults and adults living with disabilities without access to breakfast and lunch services on weekends.

We know that older adults and adults living with disabilities who have a consistent and dependable source of nutritious meals experience improved health, overall physical wellbeing, and improved quality of life. The absence of nutritious meals translates to a negative spiral of declining health and social well-being. Specifically, these individuals will be at higher risk of experiencing physical decline, cognitive impairment, social isolation, increased healthcare costs, homelessness, financial strain, and frailty.

Thousands of San Francisco residents who otherwise have little to no access to appropriate nutrition depend on POH's researched-informed, medically tailored nutrition interventions. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, POH provided over 350,000 meals to over 10,000 older adults and adults living with disabilities in San Francisco.

Our ability to care for the over 10,000 individuals who depend on the diverse nutrition programs offered by POH is being challenged from many angles:

- An unpredictable economy, including the possibility of a recession, challenges our fundraising efforts. Philanthropic giving is shifting, with a notable decline in donor retention, in part due to an outsized decline in overall dollars.
- Rising food costs mean that providing the same number of

meals is more expensive. Did you know that food costs have increased an estimated 20.8% since 2021?

- A decline in the economy, paired with a decline in social services (due to cuts in federal funding), translates to a significant increase in the number of City residents utilizing POH nutrition services.

I fully realize that residents of San Francisco want, and deserve, cleaner, safer streets. That was evident when you received 57% of the votes. At the same time, the City also prioritized essential, lifesaving services like nutrition when the Dignity Fund (Proposition I) was passed by 66% of the voters in 2016. Thousands of the older adults that will be impacted by these cuts have been San Francisco residents for decades and decades; they quite literally built this City.

Mayor Lurie, I want to both thank you for your leadership as we navigate these uncharted waters, and reiterate my appreciation for the challenge before you. I hope that, in the weeks leading into the new fiscal year, you and the Board of Supervisors will see that reallocating or withholding these Dignity Fund dollars from the Department of Aging Services will impede your stated priorities for San Francisco.

Sincerely,

Paul Hepfer, Chief Executive Officer



Upcoming Events

Sunday, June 29 | March with Project Open Hand at SF Pride

Join our SF Pride parade contingent and receive an exclusive 40th anniversary Project Open Hand t-shirt as we boogie down Market Street! Sign-up using the QR code to the right.

Sunday, July 20 | Help Is On The Way XXXI: Broadway and Beyond

Support Project Open Hand at REAF's Help is on the Way annual benefit show, featuring performances by the touring Broadway cast of & Juliet. Purchase tickets at QR code.

Friday, September 12 | 40th Anniversary Hand to Hand Gala

Celebrate 40 years of Project Open Hand at our Hand to Hand gala on September 12 at the SF Design Center Galleria—tickets available July 1!

Learn More, Sign Up, or Purchase Tickets for Upcoming Events



Visit www.openhand.org/events or scan the QR code to learn more about our upcoming events, to sign up, or to purchase tickets. We hope to see you there!

Quarterly News from Project Open Hand | Published Since 1989

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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: Four-year-old donates Lent money

Isaiah may be our youngest donor ever! Four-year-old Isaiah and his mom Grace recently visited Project Open Hand’s San Francisco headquarters.

Isaiah, who looks studious with his bright blue glasses, is full of curiosity and energy. He loves playing with his friends, Magnatiles, and Monster Trucks.

He and his mom are here to take a tour of the building and see where Isaiah’s donation is going.

“It’s easy to just give money,” says Grace. “But you can feel disconnected when you give online. Part of us coming to see Project Open Hand in-person was to show Isaiah where the money he donates is going – to help him connect his heart to his head.”

Isaiah is donating for Lent, the Christian holiday where people are encouraged to pray, fast, and participate in charitable giving. Isaiah chose Project Open Hand because he and his mom live nearby and love our mission.



As they tour, Isaiah switches between hopping on the ground, standing on one foot, and staring in awe at the food production machinery and stacks of produce.

After checking out the grocery center, where

Project Open Hand clients come to pick up groceries and medically tailored meals weekly, he checks out the back of the grocery center.

Volunteers pushing grocery carts, selecting fruits and vegetables to fill bags, smile at him as he passes by. His mom lifts him up so he can see more of the contents of the fridge.

Isaiah gets particularly excited when he sees the low-fat string cheese, a favorite food of his and a great source of protein for our clients.

“Are you having a good time?” One of the volunteers asks Isaiah.

“Yeah,” he responds sheepishly from behind his mom’s pant leg.

But his favorite part of the tour? The kitchen.

After high-fiving Project Open Hand’s Chef Adrian, Isaiah went on to see one of our industrial-sized freezers and check out the food being portioned out for Friday’s meal production.

“This was a great opportunity to show him what your money goes towards when you give to an organization,” says Grace as she holds hands with Isaiah, walking along.



Former Board member Linda Glick measures potatoes while volunteers prep and sort vegetables

The tour ends in front of the big Project Open Hand sign in the lobby, and Isaiah has a big, toothy grin when he hands



over an envelope with his donation. Project Open Hand Community Nutrition Program Director, Erika, is there to accept it.

Isaiah's name is scrawled across the front of the envelope in blue crayon and sealed with a dinosaur sticker.

The minimum age to volunteer at Project Open Hand with a guardian is eight years old, so for now, Isaiah will have to stick to tours.

“You come back in four years and I’ll teach you how to cook!” says Antonio, Project Open Hand’s sous-chef, as he passes by.

As his mom asks, “How’s that sound? Wanna come back?” Isaiah giggles in response. We can’t wait to see what he will do next!

Every gift, large or small makes a difference. To find out more donating, or about joining the monthly giving community, Supper Club, go to www.openhand.org/donate.

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 January 1, 2025 through March 31, 2025. If you have questions about this list, please contact donations@openhand.org or 415-447-2300.

DIAMOND PLATE CLUB \$100,000 and Above
Gilead Sciences, Inc. Estate of Sherilyn Moody
PLATINUM PLATE CLUB \$50,000 - \$99,999
David Snyder
GOLD PLATE CLUB \$25,000 - \$49,999
Anonymous (1) Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS
SILVER PLATE CLUB \$10,000 - \$24,999
Anonymous (1) Estate of Thomas D. Heaton Caroline Mitchel and Mark Chesebro Estate of Jane Musser Mary and Michael Osborn Stephen Rico SCAN Health Plan Dr. Charles and Jane Zaloudek

BRONZE PLATE CLUB \$5,000 - \$9,999
Anonymous (2) Penny and Sean Fottrell Margaret E. Haas Family Fund Betty Hoener James Kenney* Daniel Killar The Michael Kossman Charitable Gift Fund
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CHINA PLATE CLUB \$1,000 - \$2,499
Anonymous (3) Chef's Lounge L.L.C. Carla and David Crane John Drago The East Creek Fund Patricia and Alfred Gavello John Halvorson Hulisch/Flechtheim Fund Selwa Hussain Jacqueline Jackson Estate of Sylvester James Janet and Robert Johnson The Kaplan Family Linda Lee and Robert Reamey John M. and Penny B. Loeb MD's Charitable Fund Brigid Makes Carol Manus Dr. Judith Margulis and Jeffrey Kessler Dr. Preston Maring Neil Marquis McLeod Family Gift Account

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



From Our
Kitchen
to Yours

Black Bean Salad

A healthy and delicious salad that can be eaten on its own or as a side dish. It's a go-to recipe for spring or summer – quick, fresh, and perfect for warm days.

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
- 1-2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed, or 2 cups cooked beans
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 1 ear of corn, raw, husk removed and cut off the cob
- 1/2 or 1 whole jalapeno, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin
- Salt & pepper to taste
- (Optional) 1/2 bunch cilantro, finely chopped
- (Optional) Hot sauce to taste

Directions

1. Wash the produce.
2. Place the finely chopped onion in a bowl and add lime juice and a sprinkle of salt. Set it aside for a few minutes.
3. Add black beans, bell pepper, corn, jalapeno, olive oil, cumin, salt and pepper to the bowl. Taste and adjust the seasoning as needed.
4. If using, sprinkle with cilantro and hot sauce.
5. Serve it on top of salad greens, warm tortillas, or as a side dish with your favorite protein and veggies. Leftovers can be stored in the fridge up to 3 days.

SAVE THE DATE
FOR OUR 33rd ANNUAL GALA

Hand
TO
Hand

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF
PROJECT OPEN HAND

Friday, September 12, 2025 | 6 pm
San Francisco Design Center Galleria

