

Meal Times

NEWS FROM
Project Open Hand



Summer Issue, No. 106



AIDS WALK SAN FRANCISCO

Join us for a 10K walk to benefit HIV/AIDS programs and services throughout the Bay Area!
www.sf.aidswalk.net

TUMEKA'S STORY

A Second Chance

Tumeka has faced neglect, depression, abuse, and addiction. She has survived some of the most extreme sorrows and losses this world could deliver, yet still completely embodies strength, grace, and resilience. Above all, Tumeka's story is a reminder that right here in our community, there are lives at stake.

Tumeka was born in Martinez, California to an abusively prejudiced family. She was treated brutally, and was judged because her skin was darker than her relatives. Tumeka was pawned off to numerous institutions, camps, and relatives homes until she turned 18; at that time her mother gave her a \$100 dollar bill and asked her to leave and not return.

Tumeka adds, "I never had a childhood; I only tried to survive."

Tumeka moved to San Francisco and adapted to her surroundings, but she had a difficult time finding a job because she is transgender. As a result, Tumeka began using her body, selling drugs, and whatever else she needed to do in order to make money and find a place where she felt she belonged.

"I just wanted to be loved and accepted, but I ended up constantly around people who used me. I grew up with nobody loving me, so anything negative that happened to me throughout my life...I just figured I deserved it."

She started experimenting with drugs, and was diagnosed with HIV shortly after.

Tumeka decided to reach out to the City of Refuge Church in Oakland, adding, "I knew this life wasn't for me. I couldn't do it anymore." She was connected to a local recovery house designed for transgender people of color, and it served as a clean and sober facility for her as she began on her long road back from despair.

Tumeka began taking Nurse's Assistant classes at City College, and quickly after landing an internship at St. James Infirmary, she was offered a full time job as Executive Assistant.

She says, "After being offered the job, I finally started feeling like I was part of the human race. I had a reason to live."

Tumeka is currently an in-home care provider. She attends bible study daily, and jogs seven miles every morning. She adds, "I remind myself who I am today so I never go back to who I used to be. Before, I was just existing. Today, I'm actually living."

Project Open Hand has been a big step in her healing process and work toward a healthy reintegration into life. Tumeka admits she's still working every single day to feel completely healed. That journey may be a long one, but one that Tumeka no doubt has the strength for.

"Without Project Open Hand, I couldn't have made it because no one else would help. At one point in my life, I didn't think about feeding myself; I only thought about feeding my addiction..."

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"I'm so grateful for what they (POH) did for me; they gave me a second chance."

Tumeka in our grocery center



Project Open Hand

OpenHand.org

730 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 447-2300

1921 San Pablo Avenue
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 622-0221

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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MARK'S LETTER

Remembering Billy

I wrote in our last MealTimes about a client and friend, Billy.

Billy's unparalleled passion for our mission and his insightful counsel has made a tremendous impact on the work we do every day. In my letter, I tried to bring to life his fearless ability to roll into my office, shake me loose from my day-to-day and refocus me on the most important issues at hand. All in a thick southeastern Tennessee drawl.

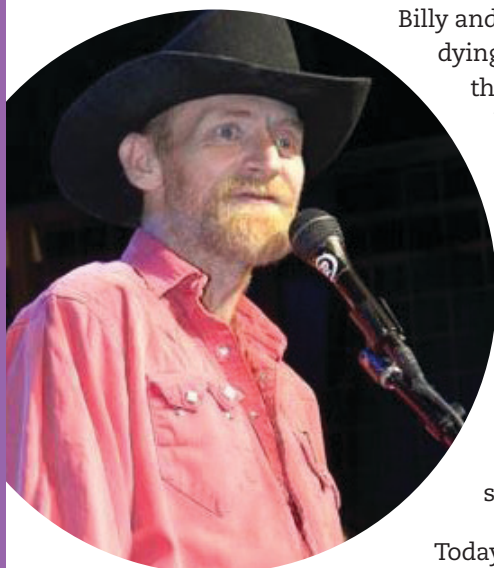
Well he's done it again.

Since my last letter, Billy passed away after 20+ years of proving our most vulnerable clients could outlast HIV, cancer and meningitis. His will to live and his advocacy for others in need was extraordinary. But he had to let go.

Talking about death in our work challenges us at our core. But it also serves to hone our authenticity and sharpen our presence in the moment.

This letter to you is both intensely personal to me and also incredibly relevant to our mission. So, it's important to me that I strike the correct tone here.

In our early days, selfless volunteers delivered clients grandmotherly comfort in the form Project Open Hand's delicious, home-cooked meals with love. We remember every one of them, despite losing so many far too early. In the late 90s, as HIV meds got better, our clients lived longer.



Billy Ledford,
6/10/1970-4/17/2016

Billy and other long-term HIV survivors like him were no longer dying from "complications of AIDS", and over the course of time they've become family to us. But early medications for HIV have left some of them frail and vulnerable to early onset of other diseases.

They began to struggle with cancer, heart disease, diabetes far earlier than their HIV-contemporaries. Billy and so many others taught us by being our clients, drawing our attention to the everyday needs of their bodies, their struggles and their hopefulness. So we began understanding the nutritional requirements for those other diseases and helping in the same way we did for AIDS. As a result, we were able to expand our programs to serve neighbors with other critical illnesses.

Today we are leaders in the "food=medicine" movement, providing complete nutritional intervention for our Bay Area seniors, as well as neighbors with diabetes, congestive heart failure, hypertension, breast cancer, Hep C and more.

Some of our clients still die before we can get them better. I miss Billy and everyone else in our Project Open Hand family who've died far too early. It's what gets me up and at it every day.

That's when Billy's voice rings most loudly in my head and in my heart. "You'd better get to it!" he'd say, as he left my office, making sure I understood the urgency of our work in nourishing the sick and the elderly.

And then he'd holler as he passed through our front door and our receptionist said goodbye, "Oh you haven't seen the last of me. Tell him I'll be back!"

Thank you for proving that our Bay Area community can be a place where we all take care of each other. Your commitment to our work makes all the difference for thousands of people every day, just like it did for Billy.

Sincerely,

Mark Ryle, LCSW, Chief Executive Officer, Project Open Hand

GETTING ON THE BALL WITH CARMELA KRANTZ

Serving as a member of our board for the last four years, we are delighted to introduce Carmela Krantz as our new Board Chair. Carmela has a long relationship with Project Open Hand and our mission, as a volunteer, a donor, and a supporter.

As a die-hard Giants fan and a season ticket holder for 27 years, Carmela first learned of Project Open Hand in 2007, as a participant in our annual “Plate to Plate” race with the Giants (now called the Giant Race). But the real story starts much earlier in Carmela’s history. As a native of Las Vegas, and the youngest of four children, she and her family lived a comfortable life, with community as a solid foundation of Carmela’s upbringing. Her Mom was a true “people person”, both engaging and fluent in relating to others.

Things took a turn, however, when Carmela’s Dad passed unexpectedly from a heart attack when she was five. Suddenly, necessities that were easy to take for granted became more of a struggle. In hindsight, Carmela reflects on how the community that she and her family helped foster played a huge role in helping them get through the tough times.

After her Dad died, Carmela and her Mom would have breakfast every morning at a local Jewish deli. Carmela remembers sitting at the counter for a corn muffin and a glass of milk, as the deli owner, Jackie Fields, would make her a jelly sandwich on a Kaiser roll to take to school for lunch. Although she didn’t realize it at the time, her mom was never charged for those daily meals. It was Jackie’s small way of helping them as members of their shared community, and it had a big impact on Carmela’s values.

After attending college at University of Nevada, Reno, Carmela moved to San Francisco in 1984. As she found business success and built her career and community in the Bay Area, the AIDS epidemic raged around her. Carmela has some friends who survived the public health crisis that ensued, but she also lost many dear friends. Having forged her own financial security, Carmela’s life had come full circle – from comfort to tragedy and back. As a mom, Carmela imparted the values she held dear to her daughter, Kenna. When Kenna was in high school and searching for a community service opportunity, Carmela suggested she volunteer at Project Open Hand, where Carmela’s good friend Ed Lamberger was on the board.

Kenna began volunteering every Sunday, and Carmela would pick her up afterwards and inquire about her experience. One day, Kenna replied, “you should volunteer too, mom!” Coincidentally, Project Open Hand needed the expertise Carmela could offer from her career in human resources. Carmela joined the board, and the culmination of her values and knowledge have been a tremendous asset to our mission ever since.

Project Open Hand is so grateful for Carmela’s leadership, her sense of community and volunteerism, and the passion that her personal journey brings to all that she does in giving back to our neighbors in need.



TUMEKA'S STORY

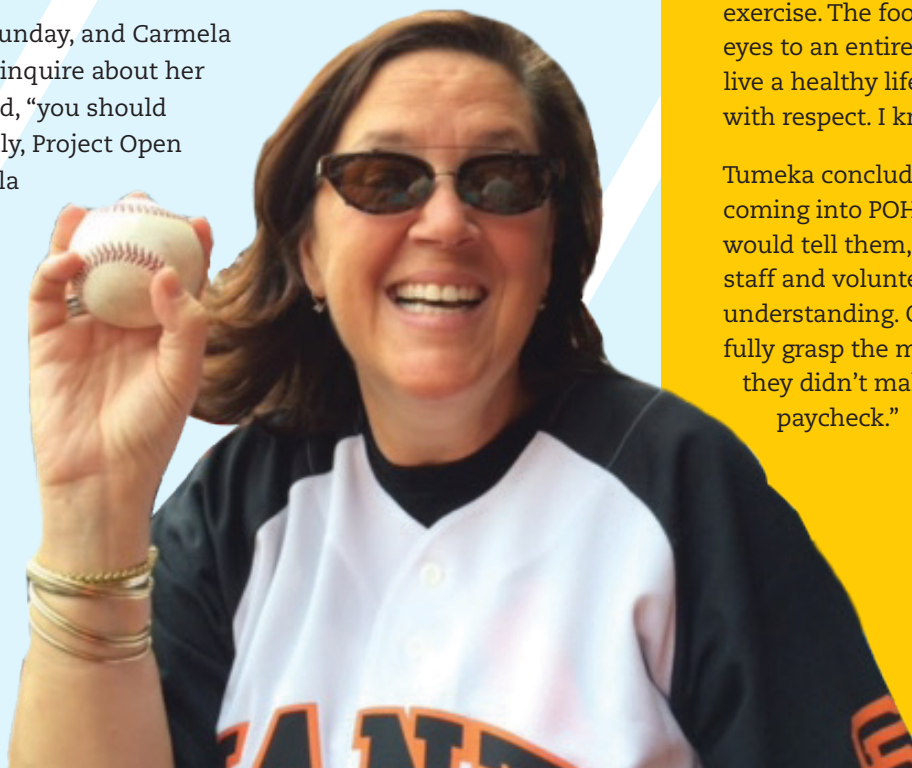
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I would have starved without POH. I’m so grateful for what they did for me; they gave me a second chance.”

Type 2 Diabetes, as well as high blood pressure ran in Tumeka’s family, and once she was diagnosed with both, she was determined to find an alternate route to treatment; a route that didn’t include so much medication. In order to break the cycle of her family’s poor health history, she turned to Kim, our registered dietitian here at Project Open Hand.

Tumeka says, “I don’t have diabetes anymore because of Kim. I’m on a quest of staying healthy, and Kim is the one who taught me how to eat right and exercise. The food at POH opened my eyes to an entirely new lifestyle. Now, I live a healthy life and treat my body with respect. I know my self-worth now.”

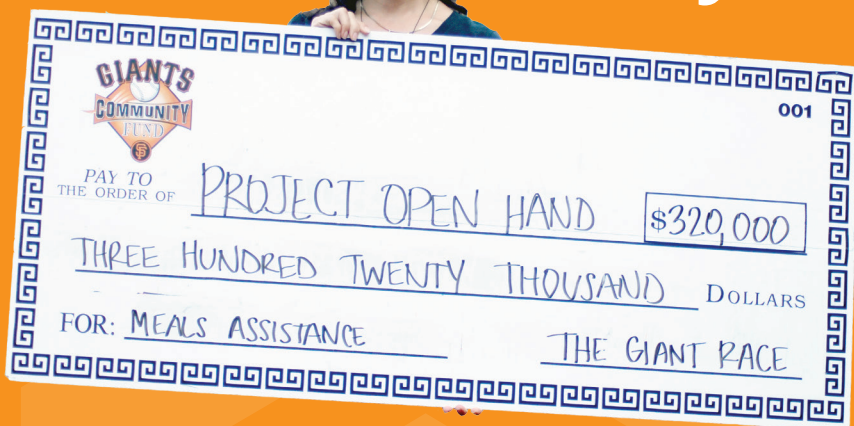
Tumeka concludes, “If someone were coming into POH for the first time, I would tell them, ‘Speak openly with staff and volunteers. Everyone is so understanding. Once you’re there, you’ll fully grasp the meals with love concept; they didn’t make the meal for the paycheck.’”





CRISTINA SOLORIO

Ready for the Race



Cristina celebrating the money raised for Project Open Hand

A marathon runner, avid boxer and classic car junky, Cristina Solorio defies stereotypes. The San Francisco native has been running the Giant Race for years, and has raised over \$100,000 for Project Open Hand's mission.

Completing her first race in first grade, Cristina says that she's enjoyed running as early as she can remember, and uses the Giant Race as a fun way to track her progress, push herself physically, and stay athletically consistent.

Athleticism is clearly in Cristina's genes, as her father has been racing his entire life as well. In fact, at 72 years old, he still wakes up at 4 AM every morning to run 10 miles.

"I used to go to my dad's races all over the bay when I was young." She adds, "Back then, he ran just for the love of running. I love it now because I wasn't pushed into it; I just saw how much fun he had with it. He was always happy after a race. I went into running with that mindset, so it's always had a meditative feel for me."

An appreciation for nutritious homemade meals, as well as helping others in need are both in Cristina's genes as well. Raised in a Mexican household, Cristina grew up in a family where these values were an important part of her daily life.

Cristina brings these principles to her work as a personal trainer, because she knows it's not just about the workout but also about what you're putting in your body, and that's why she's even more excited to run-to-fundraise for Project Open Hand.

"Project Open Hand is nutrition based, and that is what speaks to me about the organization. They are aware of everything they put into their meals, and it's not just any meal; it's food for the soul."

"My grandmother and mom prepare food like that; they put their heart into it, and it's that care that goes into it that makes it good. Project Open Hand clients are sick and need sustenance. That extra care while cooking is important when you're sick."

So, what is this all-star fundraiser most looking forward to? Cristina exclaims, "The route! I love running along the Embarcadero. I also love interacting with everyone I've gotten to know over the years. There is so much involvement beyond the race."

Want to join Cristina, fundraise for POH and win great prizes while you're at it? Sign up and fundraise-to-run the Giant Race here: [HTTP://PROJECT.OPENHAND.ORG/GIANTRACE2016](http://PROJECT.OPENHAND.ORG/GIANTRACE2016)

IT'S NOT JUST
ANY MEAL;
IT'S FOOD FOR
THE SOUL.

Dear Laura,

Thank you for hosting our Alternative Service Break team at Project Open Hand the week of March 6th. We really appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the work you do and the clients you serve.

Volunteering at POH really helped us understand food justice in the diverse city of San Francisco. Thank you again for having us and we hope you have a great summer!

NC State ASB Team:
Jake, Alyssa, Bryan, Carissa, and Liz

Dear Staff of Project Open Hand,

Thank you for the services you provide. Everyone is always good-natured, good-humored, and respectful of the clients. Your assistance this past year has made 2015 bearable. It was a hard year, physically, for me. I am grateful for your support.

Sincerely,
Kathy S.

P.S. The pork chops I got last week are in the freezer. I'm going to serve them for a special dinner night.

NOTES FROM OUR
COMMUNITY

Every gift makes a difference. In each issue of Meal Times, we give special acknowledgement to our supporters who gave during the previous quarter (January 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016) and have given a total of \$1,000. Your generosity enables us to provide nourishing food to so many of our neighbors. If you have questions about this list, please contact John McArdle, Director of Development, at jmcardle@openhand.org or (415) 447-2413.

DIAMOND PLATE CLUB**\$100,000+**

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

WHEELS WITH LOVE for MEALS WITH LOVE

Centrally located in San Francisco's Mission District, Valencia Cyclery has been doing business in the same location, and under the same ownership, since 1985. They are proud to be known as the shop that gives honest, expert advice to everyone from beginners to advanced cyclists.

For nearly three decades, Valencia Cyclery has also been amazing community supporter of Project Open Hand's mission. Every year, they donate 10% of the proceeds from their annual June sale to provide meals with love to neighbors in our community.



To date, they have donated an astonishing \$132,754, equaling 55,314 meals for our neighbors in need! This year's sale runs from **JUNE 9 - 12** – so whether you're in need of bike repairs, gear, accessories, or a whole new ride, check them out. If it has to do with biking, they're the experts.

Project Open Hand is proud to partner with local businesses like Valencia Cyclery to nourish and engage our community.



VOLUNTEER opportunities

**THE GIANT RACE BENEFITING
PROJECT OPEN HAND**
SEPTEMBER 11, 2016 | AT&T PARK

Fundraise-to-Run the 2016 Giant Race and help Project Open Hand feed our sick and elderly neighbors in the Bay Area

VOLUNTEER: GiantRace.com

QUESTIONS: events@openhand.org

FUNDRAISE: project.openhand.org/GiantRace2016



AVON 39

**AVON 39 THE WALK TO
END BREAST CANCER**
JULY 23, 2016 | SAN FRANCISCO & MARIN

Take on the AVON 39 challenge and help breast cancer patients in the community and across the nation

FUNDRAISE: www.avon39.org

AIDS WALK SAN FRANCISCO
JULY 17, 2016 | GOLDEN GATE PARK

Walk to raise funds for HIV/AIDS programs and services throughout the Bay Area

JOIN OUR TEAM: sf.aidswalk.net/POH



FROM OUR KITCHEN TO YOURS

SWEET POTATO SALAD

YIELDS FOUR PORTIONS

SALAD INGREDIENTS

- 3 medium-sized sweet potatoes, cubed
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 1 green apple, chopped
- 5 strips of bacon, roughly chopped

DRESSING INGREDIENTS

- 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. chives, chopped
- 4 Tbsp. Greek yogurt
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. whole grain mustard
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large saucepan over medium heat, add sweet potato cubes. Fill saucepan with water and bring to a boil. Cook until tender.
2. In a small skillet over medium heat, fry bacon strips until crispy.
3. Place eggs in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat and let eggs simmer for 10 minutes.
4. After 10 minutes, drain hot water and run cold water over eggs to rapidly stop the cooking process.
5. After the eggs are cold enough to handle, peel and chop them.
6. In a small bowl, combine dressing ingredients and mix thoroughly.
7. In a large bowl, combine cooked sweet potatoes, eggs, apple, and bacon. Top with dressing.