

# MealTimes



## Spotlight On DAS and POH : a public/private partnership delivers results

The San Francisco Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS) supports many nonprofit organizations that provide a range of services to older adults, veterans, and people with disabilities.

For Project Open Hand (POH), its partnership with DAS, which began in 1998, is vitally important in providing nutritious meals to over 4,200 seniors and adults with disabilities in the city.

From the Community Nutrition Program (CNP) that serves meals at 16 community center locations to our mobile grocery center that travels to underserved communities to building maintenance and kitchen equipment upkeep, DAS has been an essential source of funding support for Project Open Hand.

But in early March of this year, the City of San Francisco and DAS demonstrated their ability to respond quickly. They stepped up their support to nonprofits like POH through this most challenging and unprecedented time - the COVID-19 pandemic.

When shelter-in-place orders went into effect on March 17, the impact was felt on many levels. Six CNP locations, which offer a communal setting for seniors and adults with disabilities, closed. The 125 daily volunteers POH depends on were reduced to 28. Clients, many who fall within the at-risk group, were forced to stay home.

But the demand for POH services increased as an essential food service provider.

This begged the question – how would POH meet the increased demand?

The answer: with help from the community in partnership with DAS.

“Long-standing support for organizations like POH starts with good communication between our staff. This allows us to be able to understand the issues impacting organizations and quickly provide guidance and support as needed. In the case of POH, this meant helping support big changes in food service operations to “to-go” services, and providing the financial support to implement these changes,” said DAS Executive Director Shireen McFadden.

To help POH pivot its operations quickly, DAS, who provided \$2.5 million to POH in the last fiscal year, gave an additional \$750,000 in one-time-only funding through the GIVE2SF Response and Recovery Fund, a special fund established by the City and County of San Francisco. Corporations, foundations and individuals gave to this \$28.5 million fund through the end of July. (POH also directly received over \$2M from generous donors during these months).

With the DAS funding, POH is building a \$175,000, 16 x 30 foot walk-in freezer for additional storage capacity of more than 12,000 frozen medically tailored meals and a new 11x16 foot fridge for storing raw ingredients, produce, and dairy products.

Additionally, DAS is funding

freezers for five CNP locations and the rental of a 40-foot freezer trailer that can store up to 20,000 meals. This additional capacity has allowed POH to increase meal production from 8,000 frozen medically tailored meals to 17,000 per week. DAS funds also supported the purchase of an additional delivery van and personal protective equipment for staff and volunteers at risk of COVID-19 while distributing meals to the community.

To put this in perspective, prior to COVID-19, the CNP program offered 6,000 meals total at its 16 locations and delivered 441 single meals per week to 63 clients.

When COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines began, DAS helped the CNP program adjust its model. Congregate meal settings switched to pick-up only and saw its number of 6,000 meals a week rise to over 9,000 by early June. To help alleviate the increased costs of shifting production to create more frozen meals, DAS also contributed an additional \$3 reimbursement per meal for extra labor in producing and storing a frozen meal.

“Our ability to adjust our services from a senior congregate model to one that better met the needs of people most at risk for COVID-19 would have been significantly reduced without the quick action by DAS. They quickly approved our plan to rapidly scale up our individually prepared meals and their funding provided us the ability to increase our capacity to stay ahead of the increased

demand,” said POH CEO Paul Hepfer.

POH Director of Operations Michael McCormick also noticed the positive impact on production.

“DAS did not hesitate. They jumped in right behind us and supported us. They gave us the ability to make the transitions necessary to continue to serve not only our existing clients, but to expand and serve even more clients,” he said.

The Shelter in Place orders prevented regular food deliveries to Single Resident Occupancy (SRO) locations, and residents could not easily shop for their needs.

“When the SRO food deliveries stopped, POH and DAS quickly began working together on the matter together and started discussing solutions. Familiarity and trust between our two organizations meant that we knew what resources were available and each could quickly identify what was needed to design a solution,” McFadden said. “

778 Residents at 10 SROs who were in need of food during the beginning months of shelter in place, began receiving meals. From the end of April to the end of June, on average 2,123 meals were delivered every week to these locations. Although the number of weekly deliveries has now dropped to 580 meals due to the lifting of some COVID restrictions, the initial response helped many be food and nutrition secure during that critical time

The solutions DAS and POH  
*continued page 5*





Paul's Letter

Nutrition Security

Dear Friend,

Many of us are familiar with the term "Food Security." The United States Department of Agriculture Economic Resource Service division describes it this way, "Very low food security (old label=Food insecurity with hunger): Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake."

Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that "all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life." This latter definition is an improved, although still lacking attempt to provide focus to the role food plays in one's overall quality of life.

I'd like to introduce a new concept to you: **Nutrition Security**. This is achieved when an individual has regular and reliable access to the food and nutrition they require individually to maintain or improve their health status. While Food Security has traditionally focused on hunger and calories, Nutrition Security looks at individuals and their unique dietary requirements – often specific to a chronic health condition or with an aim at preventing adverse health outcomes.

Nearly every national and international health and medical governing body will point to the fact that nutrition is one of the key drivers to the rates of chronic health conditions that have been climbing worldwide exponentially. In the United States alone, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 70% of adults over the age of 55 have at least one chronic health condition and 50% have at least two.



Meet our Board Member, Aditya Wakankar, Senior Director, Head of CMC Strategy at Sangamo Therapeutics, Inc.. Adi joined our Board late 2019 and is working to make a broader impact through board service.

Project Open Hand started out 35 years ago in both worlds; food security and nutrition security. We have refined and enhanced our nutrition offerings along the way.

From Day One, Ruth Brinker was ahead of the curve. Ruth served her "Meals with



Love" with special attention to her friends' health conditions, at that time, HIV/AIDS.

There is no one-size-fits-all. The degree of someone's nutrition security varies by individual requirement and other societal factors such as where they live, their social-economic class and race and ethnicity. Healthy food is more expensive.

A 2013 study from Harvard School of Public Health found that eating a healthy diet (fruits, vegetables, fish, and nuts) costs \$1.50 more per day per person than eating an unhealthy diet (processed foods and refined grains). It adds up. That's an extra \$2,200 each year for a family of four and that is likely a low estimate.

Nutrition Security is a holistic approach that addresses the other factors involved in our food culture: climate change and environmental factors, sustainable food sourcing and smart processing, reducing food waste and designing programs for improved nutritional outcomes.

In early 2020, John Ingram, of the Environmental Change Institute at the University of Oxford, argued the distinction in the journal Nature Food: "Despite a significant reduction over the last 50 years in the number of people who are hungry, more than 820 million people are still hungry and at least two billion more lack sufficient nutrients; paradoxically, more than two billion people are overweight or obese. Although food intake might follow guidelines (aimed at achieving food

security), intestinal parasites, for instance, can reduce nutrient uptake and thereby limit nutrient security."

In our experience in the San Francisco Bay Area, we regularly see people struggling to manage serious health issues, trying to get by on low quality, less inexpensive calories that are often provided by well-meaning people and organizations. In such cases appropriate nutrient uptake is virtually impossible, "garbage-in, garbage out". The old argument of "well, it's better than no food at all" is a terrible position to take in this nation with so many resources.

At Project Open Hand, Nutrition Security means a healthcare professional, such as a registered dietitian, is involved in the meal planning. It means that a meal recipient's medical diagnosis is taken into account. It means that we examine the upstream sources of the food for our kitchen and grocery center, before it even reaches our stoves and kettles. It even extends to the personal touch of when we deliver the food, or a client picks up their food for the week.

As highlighted in our cover story about the support we receive from the Department of Disability and Aging Services, we need partners in this movement. We need your assistance on every level, from advocacy and policy making, to preparing meals and making a delivery of meals and groceries. These times demand a thoughtful, thorough, and humane response. Please consider donating to **openhand.org/donate**. Thank you.

*Paul Hepfer*

Paul Hepfer  
Chief Executive Officer



Quarterly News from Project Open Hand | Published Since 1989



Project  
Open Hand

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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Community

# Volunteer Spotlight: Joe DeJulio

Joe DeJulio’s fondest memories begin in a kitchen as a youth in Upstate New York.

“I was always in the kitchen with my grandmother when I was growing up,” Joe said. “I would watch her prepare meals and that always made me happy...meals have always been about bringing people together for me.”

Years have passed since Grandma Josephine shared her kitchen with Joe, but the feeling of creating meals with love continued for Joe as a longtime volunteer and advocate of Project Open Hand.

Joe moved to the Bay Area in 1993. He started volunteering at Project Open Hand in 1996 when his former employer, the GAP, encouraged their employees to volunteer at community organizations. He picked Project Open Hand because he witnessed the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the East Coast and the Bay Area.

“The GAP gave us a list of all these places to volunteer, and it only took one second to know that Project Open Hand was going to be the place for me,” Joe said.

Joe first began delivering meals from POH’s original location on 17th Street to the Marina District and he did this for two years. But when a new job opportunity required more travel, he stopped delivering meals and was only able to volunteer sporadically.

Then in October 2008, a life-changing event made him reevaluate his outlook on helping others. The woman who showed him the importance of how a simple meal can bring people together, his Grandma Josephine, passed away.

“I started to think about my own religious feelings. You’re supposed to help your brother and sister. My grandma had done this for people without having been told by anybody,” Joe said.

Joe came back to Project Open Hand and volunteered almost every Sunday morning in the kitchen, cutting vegetables and prepping ingredients.



With his professional background in operations, he arrived early to set up volunteer stations and he started the famed whiteboard, listing the day’s tasks to be completed by volunteers.

Joe received an award from the Gap Foundation for his high number of volunteer hours and he also won the national award for volunteering from AvalonBay Communities. Both companies also made financial donations to Joe’s charity of choice – you guessed it: Project Open Hand.

Joe’s enthusiasm and dedication to providing nutritious meals to the community never waned from his early days of delivering meals from the 17th street kitchen to volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 brought about challenges for Joe – shifts were longer and the limited amount of volunteers in the kitchen due to social distancing guidelines meant he had to work harder. But he continued to come in every Sunday, and he and the other volunteers figured out how to adjust to the situation.

“I never felt more committed than in 2020 with COVID. I can say I saw this seriousness with my fellow volunteers. We made it a personal challenge to be the best that we could be.

“I did this as long as I can, and I did it as often as I could,” Joe said.

Joe’s volunteer days at Project Open Hand came to an end this summer when he moved to Mexico to start a new chapter in his life. Although he’s now a country away from the 730 Polk Street kitchen, he’ll always remember the lives he impacted by doing good work.

“I see pride when my dad tells his friends that he’s proud of me for doing this all the time. It makes my family happy and proud.”

Somewhere, Joe has also made his Grandma Josephine happy too.

Consider a donation at [openhand.org/donate](https://openhand.org/donate).



# 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 Jan. 1, 2020 through Jun. 30, 2020. If you have questions about this list, please contact [donations@openhand.org](mailto:donations@openhand.org) or 415-447-2300. **View all clubs, including China Plate Club, at [openhand.org/mealtimes121](https://openhand.org/mealtimes121)**

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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: [www.openhand.org/give/supper-club](https://www.openhand.org/give/supper-club).





From Our  
Kitchen  
to Yours



Chicken Curry

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ medium onion, 1” dice
- 1 clove garlic
- ¼” ginger, minced, optional
- 1 small potato, peeled, 1” dice
- 1 medium carrot, peeled, 1” dice
- 1 stalk celery, 1” dice
- 1½ tablespoon curry powder, divided
- 2 4oz boneless chicken breast, 1” dice
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup yogurt, optional
- 2 tablespoons cilantro, chopped, optional

Instructions

DAY BEFORE:

Defrost chicken breast in refrigerator overnight. Dice chicken and sprinkle with 2 teaspoons curry powder, salt and pepper. Marinate for at least 30 minutes or overnight.

TO COOK CURRY:

In a medium sauce pan heat oil over medium heat. Sauté onion until translucent. Add garlic and ginger. Stir until fragrant about 2 minutes. Stir in curry powder and toast for 1 minute. Then add potatoes and cook for about 7 minutes. Add carrots and celery. Add diced chicken and stir until lightly browned, about 7 minutes. Add water. Bring to a boil and then lower heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes or until chicken is cooked and tender. Season to taste w/ salt and pepper. Turn off the heat, fold in yogurt and cilantro, if desired for a creamier texture.

Serve with brown rice for additional fiber.

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designed were all made with one goal in mind – continue uninterrupted service to the elderly, sick, and the most vulnerable in our community!

Marilyn, a senior client who lives in an SRO and currently receives POH meals at the Curry Senior Center, said, “I can’t cook at home because I live in an SRO. Having these meals is convenient, nutritious and healthy. I am maintaining my good health because I have these meals during this difficult time.”

The partnership between DAS and POH started decades ago. Although both have worked together to address the needs of vulnerable populations, there’s still a lot of work to be done during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

“POH, as well as many community-based organizations, have played critical roles in the citywide coronavirus response efforts and have helped keep countless older adults and those with medical conditions by allowing them to shelter in place safely. DAS is grateful for our relationship with POH and all they do for the community throughout their multiple programs,” McFadden said.

None of the work POH does and continues to do can be done without the support from donors like you. Thank you! We need you to meet the continuing level of need.

To make a one-time gift or a monthly donation, please go to **[www.openhand.org/donate](http://www.openhand.org/donate)**.



## Monthly Gifts Make a Difference

Your monthly gifts help alleviate the increased costs we are facing and ensure that we continue to get nutritious meals in the hands of those who need it most.

When you join The Supper Club, Project Open Hand's monthly giving group, you get VIP perks to POH signature events, special invitations to members-only activities, and exclusive insider access. Join the Supper Club today! Thank You.

[openhand.org/supperclub](http://openhand.org/supperclub)

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# MealTimes



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