Loaves & fishes

The end to a fantastic year!

I believe that 2014 will be known as the year of the **GREAT EXPANSION**. After analyzing current needs and implementing a new volunteer model we have success-fully expanded our reach by 29%. The number of food-insecure households are currently at the highest level ever recorded in Minnesota; this measure has been stuck at the same level for several years and shows no signs of abating. We have studied census data, viewed the Hun-ger Free Minnesota Missing Meal maps and have met with leaders who have identified pockets of poverty. To address the need, we opened new sites in Marshall, Hopkins, Crystal, Brooklyn Center (lunch), and Richfield (weekends). Our outreach is coupled with a new volunteer model so that individual volunteers can sign up on-line or call our office.

Our board of directors has also embarked on Strategic Planning and I believe that their vision lays a groundwork for a very bright future for our next ten years. Every day I am amazed by the hard work of our staff and volunteers do to ensure that our guests receive a tasty and nutritious meal, feel comforted and leave knowing that they were treated kindly and make plans to dine with us again. This is the recipe to our new slogan: **Meals. Com-fort. Kindness**—words that embody our daily work.

We continue to innovate and find partners with whom we can collaborate and increase efficiencies and decrease costs. Our partnerships with Second Harvest Heartland, The Food Group, Zero Percent, The Food Cowboy are in-valuable! To meet our mission we need to continue to seek ample funding from foundations, businesses and expand the depth and breadth of our individual donors. Please join us as we find more ways to feed those who are hungry in Minnesota. I don't know that hunger will ever end, but I do believe that we will meet our mission when people know how to find a meal at the moment they need it most.

With gratitude,

Cathy Maes Loaves and Fishes Executive Director

A happy child at Holy Rosary in South Minneapolis

From our Board of Directors

Recently the Loaves & Fishes Board of Directors embarked upon a comprehensive strategic planning initiative to envi-sion our future. This effort included input from guests, volunteers, staff, partners and the board. While we are still finalizing many details, I am pleased to report a couple outcomes of our planning efforts.

During our planning process, the board clearly affirmed our organizational values. Specifically, Loaves and Fishes values **generosity, optimism, dignity, community and nourish-ment.** These values are core to us and why we exist.

The board also made a clear decision that Loaves & Fishes exists to serve the hungry, not just in the Twin Cities area, but also throughout the state of Minnesota. While we have already taken a first step by opening our Marshall site, we will be actively evaluating other areas in the state that need our help. We hope you are as excited as we are about the opportunity to help more of our hungry neighbors.

As we finalize the strategic plan, we are looking forward to sharing more details about the exciting future of Loaves & Fishes!

Sincerely, Brian Numainville
Chair, Board of Directors

Volunteers Learn Our Guests' Stories

"He found it difficult to feed himself…"

I had extra time after serving so I joined a guest at the Brooklyn Center site; when I sat down he greeted me warmly with a smile. We made some small conversation about the meal and the weather, but when I asked about how he discovered the site, he opened up, "I live a couple of blocks away and have been trying to get my brother to come here with me for the last six months." He spoke in admiration of his brother— they had been sharing an apartment for the past 3 years. He explained that his brother, although handicapped, did all of the cooking and made good meals.

Sadly, his brother died 2 weeks ago. And since his passing, he found it difficult to feed himself, and said "Honestly, I just can't cook." This was his second meal with us and believe he will be back for the good food and the company.
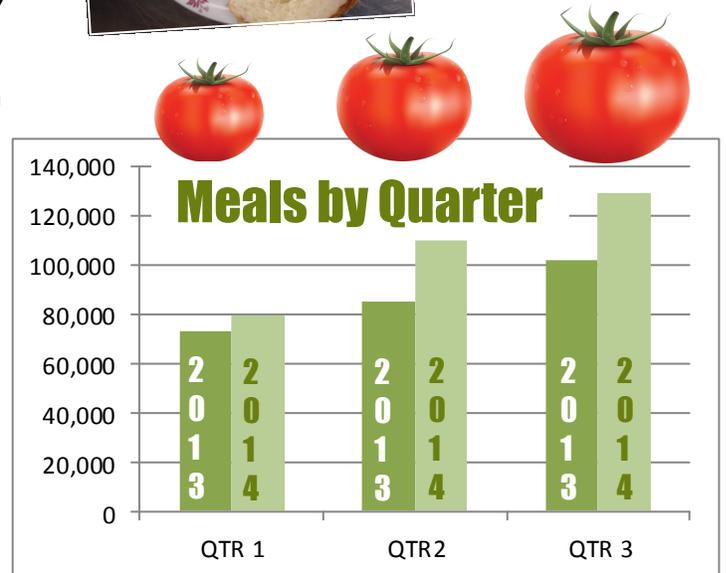
Samples of nutritious meals in South Minneapolis and Eagan.

"They were indeed very hungry…"

It was my job to serve at the drink station while working with my office team at Loaves & Fishes. A woman came in with a toddler and 2 young grade school children— they cautiously walked down the stairs to the dining room. She approached me and said, "I don't know what to do, and the kids are starving." I smiled and said, "C'mon in, we're serving baked chicken, crispy potatoes and veggies!" Her children ran to serving table, and I could tell that they were indeed very hungry.

I spoke with the woman as her children gobbled the food. She explained that she has a good job as a clerical assistant, but money right now was really tight and that it was tough being a divorced mother raising her kids alone. She said, "things were going all right until our car broke down and I'm not sure I can pay to get it fixed… what little savings I have is pretty much gone." She sounded deflated and needed a break.

We talked some more and I introduced her to guests and volunteers. After a while, the kids were laughing, playing, having fun, and so was their mom. I invited her back, and she said they would be back. Seeing them smile and laugh deeply touched me and the rest of the our team.

Meals by Quarter

(Bar chart showing meals by quarter comparing 2013 and 2014; vertical axis 0 to 140,000; QTR 1, QTR 2, QTR 3)

This newsletter was printed with a discount from Allegra and the envelopes from Liberty Envelope

We have volunteer opportunities for groups, individuals, families, sports teams, scouts—a great chance for team building. Please sign up on-line at www.loavesandfishesmn.org
or call Carly (director of volunteers) at 612-326-3673

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