

# NEWS

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# FOOD & HOSPITALITY

A Publication of The Open Door | Fall/Winter 2014



## OUR MISSION

The mission of The Open Door is to alleviate the impact of hunger in our community.

We use practical strategies to connect people to good food, to advocate on behalf of those in need, and to engage others in the work of building food security.

## WHAT WE DO

Food Pantry  
Community Meals  
Summer Meals  
Mobile Market  
SNAP Application Assistance  
Nutrition Education and Outreach  
Second Glance Thrift Store  
PowerSnack  
Community Service

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## FOOD DISTRIBUTION CENTER: HERE WE GROW!

From its humble beginnings in 1978, The Open Door has become a community food resource center for low-income residents and underserved populations of Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex, and Ipswich.

The mission of The Open Door is to alleviate the impact of hunger in our community. We use practical strategies to connect people to good food, to advocate on behalf of those in need, and to engage others in the work of building food security.

Using a prevention-based approach, grounded in nutrition education, public health, and community development, we provide those in-need with consistent, adequate access to nutrition in a socially acceptable environment.

Our programs include a Food Pantry, Community Meals, Mobile Market, Summer Meals, PowerSnack, Box Out Diabetes, SNAP Advocacy, Garden Project, Second Glance Thrift Store, and Holiday Baskets.

Last year, The Open Door helped improve the lives of 5,784 low-income people living on Cape Ann—including 1 in 6 Gloucester residents—by providing 933,762 pounds of good food and nutrition education. Since the economic downturn in 2008, we have seen a 96-percent increase in requests for food assistance.

After an extensive 2-year planning process that included input from staff, volunteers, clients and board members, The Open Door is on the grow! With architectural work by Treehouse Designs and the reputable construction team of Joset Corporation, the project broke ground this August to build a brand new 2,000 square foot addition at our Emerson Avenue location. Construction is well underway, and the project is on track for an early 2015 completion date.

The project includes the following key capacity improvements and investments:

- Double our dry and cold storage space
- Better drainage and additional parking spaces
- Sprinkler system and safety upgrades for the entire building
- Covered loading dock for ease of delivery and distribution
- Upgraded handicapped accessibility at all entrances and bathrooms
- Reconfigured client pantry waiting and distribution areas
- Volunteer Center and Service Learning space
- Retired mortgage on the building



Dear friends of The Open Door:

Over the past few years, it seems as though we have seen a growing number of stories in the media about those few people who have found a way to beat the system. People who somehow manage to “live large” on government assistance. People who take advantage.

Those stories, when true, make all of us mad!

But, those stories more often than not distract from the true value of the programs that provide a safety net for families who are struggling to make ends meet. They make it harder for people who need help to ask for help. And, they simply do not reflect the way the majority of Americans behave.

### THE TRUTH IS:

- Less than 1% of all SNAP or Food Stamp cases are fraudulent.
- 1 in 9 people—including 1 in 3 children—are food insecure in Eastern Massachusetts.
- In Gloucester, 1 in 6 people received food assistance from one of our programs last year.

### Let me share Dan’s story:

After being diagnosed with advanced melanoma in 2010, Dan Ryan, a former chef at The Franklin Cafe in the South End and Gloucester’s Franklin Cape Ann, underwent several surgeries and chemotherapy which left him unable to work. With his savings run dry and nowhere to turn, he and his wife, Tammy found their way to The Open Door for help to keep food on the table for their family.

Dan’s story is one of many that tells the truth about how help from the food pantry can stabilize the swiftly tilting world of a family or individual who is knocked sideways by an unexpected life event.

Now as we celebrate and give thanks, there are families like Dan’s who are struggling to make ends meet. ONE in SIX Gloucester residents will need a little help from The Open Door this coming year. Your support is needed now.

Will you please make a gift to help connect people to good food when they need it most? Every dollar that you donate between now and December 31 will be matched up to \$25,000. You can help us make a difference.

With much appreciation,

## Unsung Hero: Marty Morgan

Each year, we recognize a volunteer who quietly adds value to The Open Door. That volunteer never thinks they should receive recognition AND they are quick to give credit to those around them.

This year we presented the Unsung Hero award to Marty Morgan, who is our Bowl Lady, and the driving force behind the bowls at our annual Empty Bowl Dinner.



For 14 years Marty has been throwing, dipping, organizing, and firing bowls for

The Open Door Empty Bowl Dinner, which has now raised more than two hundred thousand dollars since it first began on Cape Ann.

In 2001, Marty Morgan heard about plans for the first Empty Bowl dinner, and she showed up at our doors saying simply, “I’m a potter, I’d be happy to help-and I know lots of potters I can ask.” With that, the Empty Bowl Dinner on Cape Ann was born.

That first year, there were 250 people and only 200 bowls—“I know,” said Marty, “because we ran out.” Marty was not daunted. She ran back to her studio to get some more bowls.

“The next year we had 400 people come, and it’s been going up ever since.”

In the beginning, 20-30 potters from around the North Shore would help. Today, more than 100 potters and artists make and decorate bowls along with members of the community during our dozens of Bowl Decorating events.

On Empty Bowl day, Marty says, “I love coming in, helping set up, and seeing the tables covered in different kinds of bowls—there’s a sense of Christmas and wanting to get in! It doesn’t get old!”

When Marty was asked why she wanted to get involved with The Open Door, she said because “I love to eat.” And while many would laugh at that answer, she became involved because she “couldn’t imagine not having enough food to eat.”

It seems fitting that the bowls Marty creates remind us that “somewhere, someone’s bowl is empty.”

See Marty’s work: [www.martymorganpottery.com](http://www.martymorganpottery.com)

# Helen Muise Community Service Awards

The Helen Muise Community Service Awards are named after Helen Muise, who was a faithful volunteer at The Open Door until she lost her battle with cancer in 2002. The recipient of this award must have volunteered more than 40 hours in the last 12 months, and must possess the qualities of service that we so fondly remember in Helen. Since the Helen Muise Community Service Award was first bestowed in 2005, there have been 31 recipients recognized with this honor. This year the award was given to FIVE outstanding volunteers.

## Faith Ronan | Second Glance

Faith says she believes “to be busy is to be happy.” It was that philosophy that brought her through the door at Second Glance nearly nine years ago to volunteer. Now, she comes each Tuesday to help price the bright jumble of treasures, trinkets, and gems that are donated to Second Glance. When asked why she does what she does, she answered, “I do it because it’s my way of giving back. I’ve made many good friends doing it. I love it.”



## Judy Bidwell | Food Pantry

When Judy went to The Open Door Empty Bowl Dinner ten years ago, she won a special bowl in a raffle. She said when she learned that she won, she didn’t want to collect her bowl empty handed, so she filled up a couple of shopping carts of food “and the rest as you say, is history!”

Now Judy volunteers in the food pantry and helps with special events. “It’s the people you meet—a lot of interesting people—the people that I help serve, the clients, and the volunteers I work with,” said Judy when she was asked what she enjoys the most. “The first time people come, they are uncomfortable that we are here to serve them.” The secret to putting them at ease, she says is, “Treat them how you want to be treated.”



## Dennis Todd | Mobile Market

Dennis has volunteered in his neighborhood on Saturdays for eight years at the Mobile Market at Riverdale Park. He was born just across the street at Addison Gilbert Hospital and grew up here in town with eight brothers and five sisters. He says proudly, “I am Gloucester.” He tells us, “I volunteer because it gives me something to do. I meet a lot of nice people, I like them, and they like me.”



## JoAnn Souza | Community Meals

About five years ago, JoAnne Souza walked into The Open Door dining room with a box of eight jars filled with fresh garden flowers. She said, “I seem to have too many flowers in my garden, perhaps you’d like to have them for your dining room?”

JoAnn’s kindness, acute sense of timing, and garden of posies have graced the tables of our Community Meals program every night for 5 years. When her garden sleeps in winter, JoAnn supplements with greens and store-bought flowers so that diners are always greeted with a welcoming arrangement. When asked why she does what she does, JoAnn answered simply, “for dignity and joy—I enjoy doing it, I appreciate it, and am happy to just do it.”



## Sheila McAdams | Summer Meals

Sheila McAdams has been the Principal of Winthrop School in the Ipswich Public School District for eight years. Currently, 18% of her 400+ students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Sheila told us, “as summer got close we were thinking: what can we offer kids for summer? We were thinking about the families where 2 out of 3 meals were provided at school [during the school year].” That was when she reached out to The Open Door for help.

With The Open Door as sponsor and handling the food, Sheila and her team recruited people each day to run a Summer Meals program at Agawam Village, a public housing neighborhood. Lunches were offered 5 days a week all summer long. In all, 46 people from the school community volunteered, including teachers, custodians, paraprofessionals, office staff, and parents.

“One of the greatest benefits besides making sure families had sustenance this summer was that it strengthened connections between some of those families who don’t often feel heard or valued.”



# OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNER

# GLoucester High School TRANSITIONS



Moving into adulthood is a challenge for all teenagers, and for young adults with disabilities and special needs there can be even more challenges. The goal of the Gloucester High School Transitions program is to empower students to reach their full potential as they transition from school to work.

In the program, students work on school-based skills in the morning and in the afternoon they work on skills for the job market and independent living.

For the past 7 years students have been getting some of those skills at Second Glance and The Open Door Food Pantry. At Second Glance, students learn to tag and hang clothes, and they dot, sort, and stock the book shelves. Some have worked the cash register. At the food pantry, students sort food, stock shelves, and interact with the volunteers.

Graduates of the Transitions program have gained important job readiness and life skills during their

service and have gone on to find employment. Kristen works at Market Basket and Rosie has been offered a job there as well. Zander has just been awarded his 3-year pin at Marshall's. Andrew, also a Transitions graduate, works at Shaw's. Josh worked at Cruiseport and, this past summer, Katie was hired part-time at Second Glance.

Collin, a student tells us: "It makes me feel happy to help people out."

Richard, who can often be seen pulling a wagon full of shoes through Second Glance, loves the customers, and can be heard telling them "if you tell me what size you wear, I will help you find the right shoes."

What is Richard's secret to customer service? He says, "people need things, and I listen."

Rosie, also a student, tells us: "Going out to the Glance or the pantry is a great way to get out and help someone. If someone needs help, you listen and you help. You don't just stand by and watch."

Sue Xavier, the program leader, tells us: "It's a blessing for us to have The Open Door. We wouldn't be able to do what we do every day without Second Glance and the food pantry, it allows our students to be purposeful and productive."

"It's an opportunity to learn a skill and connect with people that would not otherwise be available," she said. "It's an opening for so many job opportunities. It's equal opportunity for special need students."



**THANK YOU!**

**The Open Door and North Shore 104.9 collected 13,810 pounds of food at the annual Thanksgiving Food Drive on November 22 in Gloucester at Shaw's Supermarket, Stop & Shop, and Market Basket. Thank you COMMUNITY!**



# MY YEAR ON FOOD STAMPS

By: Kara Gallagher

We have enough. My husband has a great job. He can advance and grow; the well is deep with possibility. We feel fortunate. So feeding our family is something that is just part of the muscle memory of our family life. We never have to think about it too hard. We just do it.

But, this hasn't always been the case.

Four years ago, my husband Chris was swept up in the excitement of a start-up company. The company had a wide market in a nation of golfers and some fantastic software. The vision of what this company was going to do was grand. We are grand thinking, optimistic people, so we took the plunge. Sure it would be tight for a little while, but the business model seemed solid and it really was a great product.

But weeks of fledgling start-up pay turned into months, and we suddenly found ourselves with four maxed out credit cards and bills piling up and overdue. It's amazing how quickly it happened. The frustrating part was Chris was working. So. Hard. He was putting in hours of time and making the sales, but the company was a baby and had severe growing pains about how to adequately pay the people contributing.

One Monday morning, after a text from Chris to "not use the card until Friday," I had had enough. I was pregnant and had three toddlers at my feet and our fridge and cupboards were nearly empty. I had done some miraculous things as a mother, but I couldn't make the food we had last until Friday. I made the decision to go after resources I knew were available. I called him and told him I was going to apply for food stamps. He was not happy at first, but in that moment, with our cupboards nearly empty and half a gallon of milk, he reluctantly agreed.

*"I had done some miraculous things as a mother, but I couldn't make the food we had last until Friday."*

I also lived in a community where being on "food stamps" was sometimes synonymous with being a "freeloader" or "lazy" person. My Facebook newsfeed had angry posts once in a while of someone who had been behind someone in line paying for their potato chips and cookies with food stamps. The messages were clear: "If you're going to be eating food with MY tax money, you should be buying carrots and broccoli." Or, "Quit being so lazy." And, "Why don't you just get a job?"

The disgust came through my screen and the fact that I had applied, been approved and would be on food stamps for an entire year was something I never thought I would ever talk about. Ever.

*"I'm thankful I've been at that door of desperation so I recognize it in others when I see it."*

But today being removed from a situation gives you a lot of clarity and time to reflect. I'm grateful we were in that place as a family. I'm thankful I've been at that door of desperation so I recognize it in others when I see it. Not to pity, not to condescend, but to share hope and empathy. I'll never assume someone on food stamps is just too lazy to look for work. I'll never be annoyed if I see someone buying chips with an EBT card. I'll never throw those stones. I know the kind of day someone might have dealing with the stresses of not having enough to make the rent, pay the electric bill and care for their children, all the while keeping a smile on their face. Hiding the pain so no one knows. Low income hurts.

Because what people don't talk about is how using food stamps for food freed up money that allowed us to pay our heating bill, our water bill, the car payment, the rent, our phone bill, put gas in the car, buy diapers. It wasn't just food, it was life.



And did we need an entire year? Yes. Because you are suddenly in this hole and it takes a while to get out. He switched jobs of course, found something that matched our needs, something more stable. But the credit card debt didn't go away overnight. Overdue bills take months to get caught up when you're paying the current month plus more. There is always "plus" when coming out of that low income hole.

So nearly four years removed, I'm just grateful. I never would've predicted needing a "handout." We never fit that mold. Which is why I'm grateful. Because now I know there is no mold. According to Feeding America, 1 in 6 people in the U.S. faces hunger. Your neighbor, sister, daughter, or friend could be on food stamps right now, hoping no one knows, to avoid the shame broadcast in political rants and half-thought out Facebook posts or rolled eyes of someone behind them in the grocery store line. They could just be grateful to be able to feed their kids AND pay the bills. Years later, when their basket is bounteous, they'll remember the lean years and share what they have, they'll probably give of their excess with an open heart. And someday they may even speak up about what it meant to have help in the desperate times--the kind of help that also brought hope of better days.

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Kara lives with her husband and four children in Gloucester, MA. She now volunteers as a SNAP Advocate at The Open Door



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## THANK YOU!

If you have already sent a financial contribution to help meet the holiday need, please enjoy the newsletter, and keep us in mind for another time.

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\$25     \$50     \$100     \$250     \$500     OTHER: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support families in our community with a **MONTHLY** contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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