The Safety Trampoline

By KT Unis, Gloucester Clam | As posted November 6, 2019

Unfortunately, it’s no surprise that increased housing prices both statewide and across Cape Ann, coupled with stagnant wages and increasing income inequality, has really put pressure on many of our friends and neighbors here. This year, with a lot of wallets tightening and some at the breaking point, more families have asked The Open Door for help to put food on the table.

They serve 1 in 6 residents, most of whom are employed and not making enough. A lot of the people served by The Open Door only use it when necessary, and less than they are allowed by the pantry’s guidelines.

“The Open Door does a lot of heavy lifting in our community, and they’re what I call a “safety trampoline” – they help families bounce back into self-sufficiency as quickly as they can.”

A “safety net” is great terminology – it catches those falling through the cracks. But a trampoline is what gets them back where they were before they fell.

Here’s a little personal story about what that safety trampoline can mean.

Not even 5 years ago, when I was going through a divorce, my rent was $1,500 and my monthly freelance clients averaged $1,700. Because I was a freelancer with varying income and had filed taxes with my ex-husband previously, the state turned me and my two kids down for SNAP (Food Stamps), even though we were income-eligible. I was lucky to have some savings, but it was a pretty trying time for us and we barely made it. Thankfully, The Open Door was there for us, and in 2015, I was one of those families getting a Thanksgiving basket to cook an amazing meal for my kids with leftovers for days. When I went to The Open Door for help, it felt like the community truly cared about us. I was able to instead use that grocery money to cover my rent, to pay my bills, and to worry about a little less that week.

In the time since, I’ve been lucky enough to do better and become a middle-class homeowner (I have a basement fridge! And an icemaker! And a car with BLUETOOTH!). This happened mostly through chance, and a little through hard work, networking, and austerity budgeting. The safety trampoline worked well for me. But I will forever be thankful to The Open Door for getting us through what I often refer to as the Crap Year. A Crap Year can happen to anyone, regardless of their background, education level, employment status, or family size.

I remember that feeling, that people in this city cared, and I want other families to feel the same way. Please help. Together, we’ll be helping local families set their holiday tables.

Last year, The Open Door food pantries and Mobile Markets distributed 1.65 million meals to 7,986 low-income people.

A donation of any amount will go a long way to make the holidays so much brighter for our neighbors in need. Join the Good Egg Club and give a monthly donation to support families year round! Subscribe to monthly giving at FOODPANTRY.org/donate.
Dishing up Nutrition and Healthy Eating

This fall, The Open Door launched “Dish,” three 8-week nutrition workshops for girls after-school at O’Maley Innovation Middle School in Gloucester. From knife skills and measuring, to the food groups and healthy choices, the weekly two-hour workshops (supported in part by the Women’s Fund of Essex County) focus on health and nutrition. Each workshop includes a healthy snack made by and for the students.

Thirty-two students signed up for the first session, and 12 were wait-listed until next term. “I made the quesadillas for my Grandma, and she loved them!” said one student, showing that students practice at home what they learn in the classroom.

Students learn how to make healthy English muffin pizzas and Halloween treats during Dish after-school. University of New England Nutrition Intern Hannah Harvey helps students interpret Nutrition Facts labels.

Your gift matters. Our programs would not be possible without generous support from the community.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO MADE THE 2019 AUTUMN BREAKFAST A SUCCESS!

The Open Door Autumn Breakfast was held on October 24, 2019.

The following community members were recognized for their service in support of the mission of The Open Door:

**Helen Muise Community Service Award**
- Fred and Valerie Johnson, Gloucester Food Pantry
- Steven Rogé, Ipswich Community Food Pantry
- Mary Jane Sawyer, Second Glance Thrift Store

**Charlotte Pope Service Award**
- Fogelgren Family

**Unsung Hero**
- Pat Baker

**Outstanding Community Partner**
- BankGloucester

THANK YOU!

Maximize your donation!
Many employers offer to match their employees’ charitable donations. Please check with your employer’s HR department.

Join our Good Egg Club with a monthly donation. Donate online at foodpantry.org/donate. Choose your amount and select Monthly for Donation Frequency.

Give a legacy gift. Your bequest or planned gift can be your legacy to the community you love. For more information about planned giving, please contact us at legacy@foodpantry.org.