



City of Gloucester
Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken
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The Open Door
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The Open Door Partners with City of Gloucester to Raise Hunger Awareness

Mayor Romeo Theken Issues Proclamation Naming September Hunger Action Month



Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, center, joined The Open Door team Friday morning to recognize Hunger Action Month. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)

GLOUCESTER – As local families continue to recover from the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken joined **The Open Door** in recognizing the impact of hunger today.

Mayor Romeo Theken visited The Open Door at 28 Emerson Ave. on Friday to issue a proclamation naming September Hunger Action Month.

“We met a significant increase in need last year due to the pandemic, and continue to meet ongoing need, thanks to a community that cares,” The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine said. “Hunger Action Month is an important reminder of the steps we can all take here at home to reduce hunger by volunteering, donating and staying informed.”

Locally, the pandemic had an immediate and significant impact on hunger. **In 2020, The Open Door met a 27% increase in requests for food assistance, connecting approximately 10,000 people to more than 2.46 million pounds of food or 2.05 million meals.**

"Having good, healthy food is a fundamental building block not only for individuals and families, but for a community," Mayor Romeo Theken said. "Our city came together and worked tirelessly over the course of the pandemic to help each other through, and I'm thankful we were able to partner with The Open Door to meet key needs, like keeping food on the table. As we reflect on hunger and its impact, it's imperative that we remember what each of us can do to truly make a difference for our neighbors."

Orange lights will illuminate City Hall on Friday evening to signify a call to action for Gloucester residents to all pitch in to alleviate local hunger and raise awareness.

Hunger Action Month is observed annually, nationwide in September in an effort to raise awareness and spur action to reduce the effects of hunger in local communities. This year, Hunger Action Day is being recognized on Friday, September 17.

Feeding America's projections for Eastern Massachusetts estimate that food insecurity will remain 30% above pre-COVID-19 levels in 2021. Last year, The Open Door helped feed 1 in 5 Gloucester residents, up from 1 in 6 pre-COVID.

The Open Door also encouraged members of the community to wear orange on Friday, the color used to signify hunger awareness. Please also consider donating a bag of oranges on Friday at either The Open Door's facility at 28 Emerson Avenue, Second Glance (the thrift store of The Open Door) at 2 Pond Road, or Market Basket in Gloucester.

Various community groups joined in recognizing Hunger Action Month, including but not limited to the Gloucester Police, Fire, and Health Departments; Rose Baker Senior Center; Sawyer Free Library; Cape Ann Museum; Rockport Police Department; Manchester-By-the-Sea Police Department; Manchester-By-the-Sea Council on Aging; Essex Police Department; Rowley Police Department; Wenham Police Department; Backyard Growers and We Are All In This Together Gloucester.

About The Open Door

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.

Founded in 1978, The Open Door is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit and community food resource center for low-income residents of Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex, Ipswich, Hamilton, Boxford, Rowley, Topsfield, and Wenham. In 2020, The Open Door helped stabilize the lives and health of 9,681 unduplicated people from 4,703 households through the distribution of 2.46 million pounds of food, amounting to 2.05 million meals. Requests for food assistance during the 2020 pandemic year were up 27 percent.

Programs of The Open Door include two food pantries (located in Gloucester and in Ipswich), 12 Mobile Markets, Community Meals, SNAP Application assistance and Advocacy, Medically Tailored Groceries, Nutrition Education, Therapy and Counseling, Food Rescue, Summer Meals for Kids, On Your Mark Job Training and Internships, Holiday Baskets, Senior Soup & Salad, (NEW) SmartChoice™ at The Open Door and (NEW) Grocery and Meal Delivery. Second Glance, the thrift store of The Open Door, provides revenue for the organization, referrals for people in need, and recycles textiles and other materials.

For more information, visit FOODPANTRY.org.

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Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, center right, shares recipe tips with The Open Door team and President and CEO Julie LaFontaine, center left. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, right, reads a proclamation naming September Hunger Action Month as The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine looks on. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



From left: Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, President and CEO Julie LaFontaine, Director of Operations Jennifer Perry, Director of Business and Finance Marcia Hubbard, Director of Thrift Operations Susan Zwart, and Director of Advocacy and Development Sarah Grow. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)