



The Open Door
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The Open Door Holds Mobile Market Farmers Truck Ribbon Cutting at Cape Ann Veterans Services

First Mobile Market with New Truck Serves Local Veterans



Gloucester Veteran Robert A. Walter Jr. joined fellow veterans at The Open Door Mobile Market on Friday, featuring the nonprofit's new Mobile Market Farmers Truck. (Courtesy Photo The Open Door)

GLOUCESTER — The Open Door held a ribbon-cutting today to celebrate the arrival of its new Mobile Market Farmers Truck, which will bring more free healthy food to more people at partner sites throughout the North Shore.

After the ribbon cutting, held at Cape Ann Veterans Services at 12 Emerson Ave on Friday morning at 10 a.m., local veterans had a chance to choose fresh produce and eggs at the first Mobile Market featuring the Farmers Truck.

“The Farmers Truck puts our Mobile Market on wheels and strengthens our capacity to reach people where they gather, live, and learn,” President and CEO Julie LaFontaine said. “This kind of food security infrastructure investment connects people to good food and pays big dividends in community health and wellbeing.”

Purchased with state Food Security Infrastructure Grant funding, the Ford E450 Super Duty Farmers Truck increases the capacity of The Open Door Mobile Market program (initially launched in 2005) to bring fresh fruits, vegetables, and protein choices to underserved neighborhoods.

Sen. Bruce Tarr, Rep. Ann Margaret Ferrante and Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken played a key role in making the Mobile Market Farmers Truck a reality.

“We’re able to create at the state level these opportunities and see them trickle down into the community,” Rep. Ferrante said. “We’re able to bring it from the state level, to the local level, right down to your kitchen.”

Rep. Ferrante said when she and other legislators saw the impact of food distribution issues early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, they worked together to put in place Food Security Infrastructure grant funding so that food would be made more accessible.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic we did see, time and time again, the need to make sure food was getting to the people who need it...Food coming into Massachusetts needed to be distributed in a different way,” Sen. Tarr said. He added that throughout the pandemic The Open Door evolved to meet challenges and remained open never missing a day as a result.

Sen. Tarr presented LaFontaine with a Citation from the Massachusetts State Senate for the Mobile Market Farmers Truck.

When parked at a Mobile Market site, the side of the Farmers Truck opens to reveal multiple display shelves with an array of healthy produce choices so clients can pick the food they need for their families. Inside the truck, along with a service counter and additional storage, an eco-cooling system keeps food fresh.

“This was one of the best things we could ever do, right here,” Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken said. “You shouldn’t have to use your very low income to have to buy groceries, or medication, to survive.”

Robert A. Walter Jr., a Gloucester veteran who served in the Navy from 1978-1982, was deeply thankful for the opportunity to shop the Mobile Market.

“I think it’s beautiful. Look at all the food—it is crisp and clean. This is so nice for them to do,” Walter Jr. said.

North Shore Community College (NSCC) President William Heineman also attended the event, and stressed the importance of making fresh produce and protein options more accessible. The Open Door Mobile Market program serves both the Danvers and Lynn campuses of NSCC.

“It may not be that well known, but food security is a huge challenge for community college students,” said North Shore Community College President William Heineman. “And unfortunately that challenge has gotten much bigger because of the pandemic. This partnership North Shore Community College has with The Open Door is really the difference for a lot of our students for being able to take care of some of their needs around food, that allows them to take care of their academic work.”

The Mobile Market Farmers Truck makes its debut this November and will visit Mobile Market sites of The Open Door including underserved neighborhoods, senior centers, schools, NSCC and more.

Additional attendees of the event included members of The Open Door Board of Directors, The Open Door Team, Director of Veterans Services Adam Curcuru, Mayor-Elect Greg Verga, Representatives of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, Gloucester Public Schools Superintendent Ben Lummis, Mobile Market Partners including Councils on Aging and Senior Centers, and Cape Ann Veterans.

About the Mobile Market Program

The Open Door Mobile Market program was first launched at Riverdale Park in Gloucester in 2005 and has since expanded to serve sites throughout the nonprofit’s service area. The Mobile Market program provides qualifying individuals with up to 20 pounds of fresh produce and protein choices at no cost, as well as nutrition education and outreach. The produce is grown locally and purchased wholesale or from the Greater Boston Food Bank.

The program connects families, children and seniors in the North Shore to healthy food in a socially acceptable way in the communities where they live, learn and play. By reducing barriers to access such as transportation, cost of food, nutrition education and social stigma, the program reduces the impact of poor nutrition that leaves many in need vulnerable to devastating health consequences.

All sites are strategically located to reduce the need for transportation and placed in areas with the greatest need.

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 this pandemic year were up 27 percent.

For more information, visit FOODPANTRY.org.

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From left: The Open Door Board of Directors Member Irene Josephson, Director of Veterans Services Adam Curcuru, Cape Ann Veterans Services District Benefits Coordinator Vionette “Vee” Chipperini, The Open Door Warehouse Coordinator Vito Aiello, Rep. Ann Margaret Ferrante, The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine, Sen. Bruce Tarr, Gloucester Public Schools Superintendent Ben Lummis, The Open Door Board Chair, Kersten Lanes, Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken and Mayor-Elect Greg Verga. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine speaks during a ribbon cutting event for the nonprofit's new Mobile Market Farmers Truck. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Warehouse Coordinator Vito Aiello opens up the Mobile Market Farmers Truck for its first Mobile Market. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Local veterans “shop” the free Mobile Market. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



Local veterans had the opportunity to “shop” for fresh produce and eggs, at no cost, at the Mobile Market at the Veterans Services Center on Friday, featuring The Open Door Mobile Market Farmers Truck. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)