



Fall 2022

# newsletter

Dear friends,

It was a joy to see so many of our neighbors at last month's TableFest, and it was wonderful to break bread with you all.

Your support enables us to adapt to the need in front of us, whatever challenge may arise. In this newsletter, you'll hear about our **aid to migrant clients** arriving in Silver Spring from Texas. You'll also hear **the story of Abdoul**, whom you may recognize as a former client. When we first met, I was struck by his infectious smile and deep, baritone voice. He told me he was trained in French cooking and would love to be a part of our work here. Today, he's a member of our staff, embodying the transformation we work towards every day. We know hundreds of others in our community just like Abdoul: temporarily down on their luck and in need of an organization like Shepherd's Table, backed by our thousands of donors and volunteers, to help them get back on their feet.

We strive to fulfill our mission through thoughtfully built programs provided with the deeply personal support of our staff. A client recently visited the Clothing Closet in need of a suit for a job interview, and case manager Tinsae Adugna carefully styled his new look as fellow clients and staff cheered him on. **None of this would be possible without your generosity and trust**, and we thank you for your continued support as we steward this community's resources for the good of the whole.

Sincerely,

Manny Hidalgo, Executive Director

Guests enjoying TableFest



Clients shopping the Clothing Closet

# Welcoming Abdoul, a Former Client, to our Staff

In May 2021, [we interviewed Abdoul](#) as a former Shepherd's Table meal guest. At the time, he shared how the services he received at Progress Place equipped him to secure housing and a job, and we celebrated the victories he'd experienced in his journey. But even then, Abdoul knew his dream was to return to Shepherd's Table as a Chef. This past summer, **that dream became a reality**. Now, he excels not only as a culinary professional but as a staff member with lived experience and deep empathy for our guests. From Abdoul's perspective, nothing is as essential in the journey of empowerment as relationships. "In my personal situation, I think that the team here saw some kind of strength in me," he shares. "If they didn't believe in me, I wouldn't be here." Chef Christina specifically believed in his dream of putting his culinary training to use. Now, the two work alongside one another, preparing meals for our guests.

Abdoul spends his breaks outside with clients, hearing their stories. "They know me; I'm a part of them. So they tell me their issues, and I always try to encourage them: it's not impossible. Look at me." He knows that our meal guests are looking for something to believe in, for the confidence to work towards self-sufficiency against seemingly insurmountable odds. Our services and meal programs make a huge difference—



Abdoul at work in the ST kitchen

Abdoul notes, "Happiness is food"—but ultimately, Abdoul believes the relational impact equips individuals to overcome their battles. **"My work doesn't start or end in the kitchen,"** Abdoul shares. Fortunately, it's a perspective shared by the rest of our staff. "It's very seldom that you get into a situation where people are genuinely there to help and want you to succeed. But this is true of my team and the whole organization."

Abdoul recognizes our unique opportunity to impact the day-to-day life of our meal guests. Speaking from firsthand experience as a client and a chef, he shares, "Their day starts with us, and it ends with us. When they come for breakfast, you give that one-on-one attention just for a little bit; you'd be amazed how powerful those words are." It's the work of dignifying each human being with your attention: "If you can start them off on a good day, they can say, 'oh yeah, he sees me as a person.'" Aligned with the mission of Shepherd's Table, Abdoul's passion is to encourage others through food and friendship. "They say in life, everybody has a calling," he reflects. **"This is mine."**

## Planned Giving

In early September, Zachary Fromberg graciously left a bequest for \$21,103 to Shepherd's Table in his will. **Planned giving is pledging a major gift as part of your overall estate planning.**

For Shepherd's Table, knowing these bequests in advance is a massive help in projecting and planning for the future. And although we seek to go out of business before another 40 years are in the books, as long as food and housing insecurity are prevalent, we must continue. For more information on planned giving, please get in touch with Daniella Burgos at [dburgos@shepherdstable.org](mailto:dburgos@shepherdstable.org).

# Serving Migrants Displaced from Texas

In August, recent asylum-seekers from Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba were bussed from Texas to Union Station. Learning of the food and Spanish-speaking staff available at Shepherd's Table, several families found their way here. Staff member Evert Vargas took the lead on instantly providing food, bus tokens and case management services. One family, consisting of a couple and their three children, all under ten, had journeyed from Venezuela to the U.S.-Mexico border by hitching rides and tackling segments of the journey on foot. They had been in the U.S. for only a week when they were bussed to D.C. under false pretenses of provisions.

Evert was able to help this family and others navigate changing addresses from Texas to Maryland so they would be able to schedule

and make their immigration hearings. Our Meal Services team kept the families from facing hunger, and Evert provided the social services and relational support necessary to meet the challenges before them. Having immigrated from Nicaragua as a child, Evert deeply empathizes with these individuals. "Whenever you move out from your country, it's not because you want to leave; **you want a better life**," he shares, remembering nights spent on the floors of relatives as they tried to find housing. "We were trying to survive."

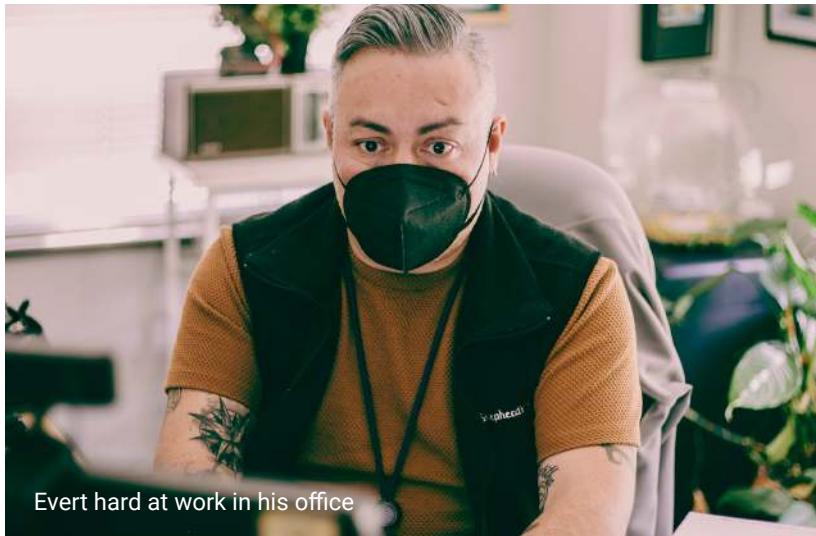
For Evert, it's challenging to see how unfairly these ST clients are treated by the immigration system—especially with minors involved. Evert explains that if adults are found

sleeping on the streets with kids, their children could be apprehended by Child Protective Services: a tragedy that is also difficult to understand across language barriers and unfamiliar foreign legal processes.

It's been an all-hands-on-deck effort to serve our new neighbors arriving at Union Station, but as Evert shared on behalf of our staff here, "We are really happy to keep helping, no matter what, with the resources we have. **We are human beings, and we understand what the situation is for this community.**"

For these families and anyone else who walks through our door, our team is here to adaptively respond to the need and receive the individual as human, dignified and worthy of compassion.

**"We are really happy to keep helping, no matter what."**





**Shepherd's Table**

TOGETHER MEETING NEEDS. CHANGING LIVES.

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A client outside Progress Place



Volunteers prepping veggies

## Kickoff the holiday season with Giving Tuesday

As the holidays are quickly approaching, the season of giving is upon us. **Stock Monday and Giving Tuesday**, two “holidays” of the digital age that immediately follow Thanksgiving, present opportunities to advance our work at Shepherd’s Table through stock and monetary giving. Mark the calendar, follow us online, and consider donating as we seek to raise **\$30,000 on November 28th and 29th**.

Scan the QR code to follow us on social media and stay in touch

