



newsletter

Hello Friends,

This year, thanks to your support, we have served over 41,000 meals-- 10,000 more meals compared to last year. This significant increase underscores our community's ongoing challenge of food insecurity, and your contribution has played a crucial role in this.

We are halfway through our **much-anticipated Culinary Skills Training Program** with our four students. From mastering knife skills to learning about budgeting and time management, our students are well on their path to securing externships and future employment. They've learned how to cut meats, make delicious sauces, harvest their own garden-fresh ingredients and more, while also working as a team.

Our new **Beyond the Table partnership with Stephen Knolls**, a school offering a Special Education Program for students aged 3-21, is underway. Through this collaboration, Shepherd's Table provides 25 students with access to nutritious dinner meals to take home. This is just the beginning of our efforts to establish more partnerships targeting food-insecure populations, extending our reach to support those in need.

In addition to becoming more targeted in reducing food insecurity, one of our priorities is to boost our Urban Garden to function year-round, ensuring a consistent source of fresh and

culturally diverse food for our meal guests. We aim to maintain a fruitful garden throughout the year by electrifying our greenhouse.

2024 has included many advocacy efforts on behalf of our clients and to engage our community, beginning with Shepherd's Table hosting a **Power of Community Day**, where over 40 individuals gathered to discuss housing and food insecurity, employment, and behavioral health. The attendees included staff, clients, council members, elected officials, committed volunteers, and other influential community members. In smaller discussion groups, possible solutions were explored with field experts. One topic that piqued the most interest was employment and the difficulties our clients face in finding a job due to a lack of identification cards, other legal documents, or references. The discussion transitioned to how Progress Place could better support individuals transitioning into employment. We hope to continue having these conversations.

Furthermore, I and other service providers and community members expressed the importance of on-site peer support specialists at **Progress Place in the FY25 budget**. We worked with our partners to describe the importance of having trained behavioral health support combined with lived experience to provide trauma-informed care for our most vulnerable meal guests.

Looking ahead, we are deeply grateful for your support and would love to learn more about our donors. Your commitment to our mission inspires us to continue finding ways to connect with like-minded individuals. We believe that together, we can make a significant impact on the lives of those in need. Your support is invaluable to us, and we want you to know how much we appreciate it.

Manny Hidalgo, Executive Director



Donor and Volunteer Survey

Donors and volunteers like you are the backbone of our organization. Your ongoing contributions fuel the growth and expansion of vital initiatives like our new exciting Culinary Skills Training Program and of course, our Daily meal program.

Your unwavering support is valuable to us, which is why we're eager to learn more about you.

By taking this brief survey, it will serve as a way for us to better understand the individuals who support our cause and explore ways to connect with more like-minded individuals willing to stand by us.

[Take the survey today!](#)

Honor Our Roots, Grow Our Future

How you can grow our future: For over 40 years, Shepherd Table's mission has bloomed — and today, you can plant a seed that will grow for the next 40 years. By including a legacy gift in your will, you'll honor our roots and support the future of Shepherd's Table for years to come. Our partner, FreeWill, makes it simple to create a free estate plan and grow your legacy this season.

[Click here to grow your impact with your legacy!](#)

Program Updates: Culinary Skills

As we reach the halfway mark of the Culinary Skills Training Program, it's truly remarkable to witness the significant progress that our students have made. The program has seamlessly woven itself into Shepherd's Table's fabric, feeling like it has been a part of our organization for years.

Orientation came and went, and our four students—Prince Maleque, Angel, Chanel, and Chris, were thrown into the fast-paced curriculum. "Knife skills and life skills" is how Christina Moore, Director of Meal Services and lead of the program, refers to the program.

Our program stands out for its **holistic approach**. Each morning our students not only learn culinary skills but also delve into important life skills like budgeting and time management. They also engage in mindfulness classes, fostering a balanced and mindful approach to their learning and personal growth.

Every week the students explore a different theme, covering topics like kitchen safety, fruit and vegetable classification, cooking methods, and mother sauces.

Throughout the program, the students progressively build upon their knowledge in preparation for their ultimate goal: acquiring a **ServSafe certification** for an externship and eventual employment. Witnessing their confidence grow, Moore notes, "From day one until now, the students have become much more open. They support each other, are forthcoming about their challenges, and are eager to work through them with us."

With access to a spacious industrial kitchen at the Silver Spring United Methodist Church, the students have the freedom to experiment at their own pace. Christina recalls, "It was heartwarming that they were excited to find out that they would actually be eating the meals they cooked, such as a whole fried snapper."

One memorable day, after the students prepared a gorgeous meal of fillet mignon with homemade frites and a creamy mushroom sauce, Angel poured out his gratitude in between bites, saying, "This class saved my life. It's helping me stay clean. Sometimes I mess up, I'm human, but I really want to do things right." When asked what his favorite part of the program has been so far, he, without hesitation, expressed that it is the opportunity to cook, something he loves, while also getting paid for it (the students are given a daily stipend). Prince Maleque highlights that teamwork and the opportunity to celebrate each other's victories are his favorite parts of the program so far. Learning to cook a perfect steak was also high on his list of memorable experiences.

You can see how the students beam after they've created a beautiful dish. For the Culinary Skills Training students, having the opportunity to learn new things and enjoy experiences they wouldn't typically have access to otherwise is particularly meaningful, given the challenges they've faced in their lives and their desire for self-improvement.



It's Volunteer Appreciation Week!

The beauty of Shepherd's Table is that our volunteers come from all walks of life: students fulfilling social service hours, retirees, organizations, and religious groups. Everyone brings something different to the table. We wanted to highlight two volunteers, one who has been with us for over a decade and the other who joined us during the pandemic.

Judy Hayes, a volunteer since 2021, discovered us through her church, St. Michael's, and found fulfillment in living out her faith through service. When she began volunteering here, she realized her perspective on food insecurity and poverty shifted as she recognized that those affected are her neighbors. *"Everyday interactions with others have made me truly understand that they are my neighbors, which makes me feel more connected to the issue of food insecurity."*

Judy is a dedicated volunteer. She even learned sign language to communicate better with a hard-of-hearing client. Judy prefers helping serve meals because it allows her to interact with our clients directly. She also helps us reduce waste in our kitchen by taking home aged apples and turning them into delicious apple butter and cakes that she then shares with staff and clients.

Bill McDermott is a Shepherd's Table veteran who has been volunteering with us for over a decade. He can be seen all over the building, alternating between helping with meal service and in the Resource Center. He first started volunteering in the Resource Center when we were on Dixon Avenue.

"One of the benefits of washing dishes is experiencing the gratitude from clients as they return their dishes. It has made me more compassionate and understanding because these individuals are now people I know, not just 'them.' It has a profound impact on your own perceptions," Bill shares. Bill firmly believes that the organization is a blessing to the community and enthusiastically encourages others to volunteer whenever possible. Thanks to his efforts, groups from his church are now getting involved.

Shepherd's Table volunteers have been vital to helping us succeed in our mission for the last four decades, over 3,488 people contributed their time with us last year. This Volunteer Appreciation Week, we're showing our gratitude with daily sweet treats and new Shepherd's Table shirts in the volunteer lounge.



Fundraising for the Urban Garden

This spring, we launched a campaign to support our Urban Garden. With your help, we will be able to purchase supplies such as seedlings, soil, and pots and electrify our greenhouse for year-round use!

Our Urban Garden supports sustainability and gives our clients a chance to be a part of our Progress Place community. Once a week, our clients join our Garden Club to help repair planting containers to sow seeds in mini-greenhouses, transplanting, propagating, and watering.

[Click here to support the electrification of our greenhouse!](#)

To learn more, contact our Urban Garden Coordinator at dboger@shepherdstable.org.





Volunteer Michelle Betton at the Resoure Center



Optometrist Dr. Henry Friedman conducting an eye exam in our Eye Clinic

OUR STAFF

Manny Hidalgo

Executive Director

Haile Gebregziabher

Deputy Executive Director

Daniella Burgos

Director of Development & Communications

Tinsae Adugna

Director of Social Services

Christina Moore

Director of Meal Services

Angely De La Rosa

Social Services Program Manager

Brenna Olson

Advocacy Manager

Victoria Benesch

Communications Associate

Mindy Hofmann

Grants and Contracts Manager

Sharon Flynn

Philanthropic Gifts Advisor

Debbie Boger

Urban Garden Coordinator

Elise Stigliano

Urban Garden Assistant

Marcy Merti

Volunteer Coordinator

Paola Ortiz

Chef

Gary Bullock

Chef

Teshema Nelson

Chef

Willie Thompson

Chef

Chelsea Jones

Chef

Sonji Owens

Business Manager

Mohamed Banya

Senior Operations Assistant

Roberto Maravilla

Operations Assistant

Robert Savoy

Operations Assistant

Nancy Martinez

Operations Assistant & Receptionist

Claudia Young

Operations Assistant/Driver

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Torey Carter-Conneen, Chair

Paul Kaplun, First Vice-Chair

Amber Harris, Second Vice-Chair

Chaz D. Brooks, Secretary

Sonya Snedecor, Treasurer

Helaine Resnick, At-Large Representative

David Airozo

Dean Cooper

Ken Farber

Steven Jacobs

Debra Liang-Fenton

Debra Magidson

Christine Pendzich

John Seelke

Elizabeth Uriyo

Fred Seo

Ann Marie Staudenmaier

Heather Tinsley

Lene Tsegaye

Hillery Tumba