

# foodforthought

Special COVID-19 Report

SUMMER 2020



## A Message From Karen Pearl: Our COVID-19 Response

*Editor's note: As this newsletter goes to print, our hearts are broken. The murder of George Floyd by a police officer is horrifying and cannot be tolerated. The deaths of so many before and after him are equally heinous. The protests in our City and across the country have focused America's attention on racism, inequality and bigotry. As an organization, we work diligently on a daily basis to fight these indignities. This has always been true and will remain true.*

*God's Love is committed to justice, change and equality, and we will do all that we can to advance these values in our workplace and City. We stand with Black communities now and into the future. We demand changes in our systems that will lead to equal access and justice. Soon we hope to look back on these turbulent times and know that all the voices speaking out now have indeed changed our world. Along the way, we will be there as partners in the struggle. We will share more online and in future newsletters.*

This spring was like no other at God's Love We Deliver. The unfolding COVID-19 crisis required us to adjust our operations on a daily basis. We shifted menus, created new protocols for volunteers and delivery, instituted social distancing and new sanitation routines, and managed thousands of calls from concerned clients and community members. We did all this while welcoming an unprecedented 1,500 new clients onto our program—an extraordinary task.

As senior centers and care facilities across the City shuttered, we experienced five times our usual number of referrals. Daily meal production grew by 25%. Our policy team cooperated with City officials and community leaders to ensure that vulnerable NYC residents had access to meals that help keep them at home and out of the hospital.

In order to provide additional nutrition and reassurance to our clients in the event of delivery interruptions, we packed and delivered three weeks' worth of shelf-stable food for each client. This also allowed God's Love to close our operations for one week to give staff and volunteers a much-needed respite and to deep-clean our facility.

We are so grateful that generous support from foundations, corporations, individuals, the New York City Council, and New York State Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program made our quick response to the crisis possible.

The Food Is Medicine Coalition (FIMC), our national association of medically tailored meal agencies, is supporting partners across the country by leading COVID-focused discussions around best practices regarding safety and operational changes. FIMC agencies have been innovators, creating new protocols and interpreting guidance in real time to keep volunteers, staff and clients safe. I trust that many new and emerging practices will be incorporated into our operations post-crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic bears some similarity to the earliest days at God's Love, at the start of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Then and now, we treat people with respect and dignity no matter their illness or circumstances. These are anxious times. My deepest gratitude goes to our volunteers, staff and the entire God's Love We Deliver community for their commitment and care. Because of you, our clients know we are there for them.

Our client and meal numbers continue to grow, resulting in enormous unbudgeted expenses. Thank you for helping keep God's Love fully operational. We have a very challenging year ahead of us. Your support is vital to continuing this life-sustaining service into the future.

*Karen*

IN THIS ISSUE



# God's Love We Deliver Celebrating 35 Years



We began with the simple principle that no one should ever face the dual crises of illness and hunger. We brought meals to homebound people living with HIV/AIDS.

Today, with your support, we've grown, expanded our mission, and reached some noteworthy milestones:

- We now welcome over 17,000 volunteers annually.
- We cook and home-deliver more than 2.33 million meals each year.
- We serve clients living with more than 200 unique diagnoses.

So much has changed in our 35 years, but our core values have not. Every day our clients struggle with malnutrition, illness, hunger and isolation and, every day, more and more people reach out to us for help. When they contact God's Love, they find a community that cares deeply about them.



Together, we are dedicated to cooking and delivering the individually tailored meals and providing the nutrition counseling that our clients so urgently require at a time in their lives when they need it most. Thanks to you and your support, our meals and services are free to clients and full of love.

The COVID-19 pandemic we are living through reminds us of our earliest days. Then, at a time filled with great fear and uncertainty, we learned how to treat people with respect and dignity no matter their illness or circumstances. We honored their hopes and fears as they lived through anxious moments, day by day. Then and now, we put all of this into practice.

This is a scary time for all of us, but especially our clients. We are working diligently so that our entire community – clients, staff, volunteers and donors – feel now as they did when we first started: safe, cared for, and supported. To meet the growing demand for our services and ensure we are serving as many people as possible, we have streamlined our menu and brought on additional staff in our Nutrition, Client Services, Delivery and Meal Packaging Departments.

To keep everyone safe, we have changed many of our protocols from screening volunteers and practicing social distancing, to implementing no contact deliveries and wearing masks in our building and on the road. While everything has changed, the most important thing has not: the love we bring to our clients each and every day.

With illness comes so much challenge; it is why we focus so hard on bringing many moments of celebration to our clients, through personalized birthday cakes, special Thanksgiving meals, holiday gifts, and more. Since our beginning, our clients have reached out to us to tell us how much they appreciate this loving care.

For the next year, we will be doing things – big and small – to celebrate and remember our 35th Anniversary. We hope you join us on our blog and on social media as we celebrate all that we have accomplished together in 35 years of caring for our neighbors living with severe illness. And, we look forward to the day when we can gather together to celebrate this milestone anniversary.



## CLIENT STORY

### Delivering Love to Herbert



Herbert is a former chef and musician who still plays the drums at age 92. He is a client of God's Love and he gets to visit with our driver Edward. We know our

deliveries are so much more than food to Herbert and our clients: they're connection, they're hope, and they're love.

God's Love We Deliver began delivering to Herbert in the spring of 2019. The meals he receives are made to address his congestive

heart failure and its treatment. Additionally, he has trouble chewing and swallowing, so his meals come pureed.

Since his first delivery, Herbert has received hundreds of meals, and a whole lot of love from God's Love, including a personalized birthday cake with a hand-decorated card on his birthday. Herbert tells us our food is top-notch, and the people of God's Love are reassuring and kind.

Perhaps his favorite part of our program is his time with Edward, who's been delivering to Herbert since he first joined the program. The two have struck up a friendship – Edward looks forward to delivering to Herbert, and the meal drop off is the highlight of Edward's day. "That's my buddy," Edward tells us. "I just love seeing Edward every week!" says Herbert.

Herbert's son, Eric, who is 42 years old and works as a creative producer, worked directly with a God's Love Registered Dietitian

Nutritionist to set up his father's meal plan. "It really has been wonderful. My family itself is very small; it's just me, my dad and my wife... it's almost as if we have been brought into another family at God's Love We Deliver," says Eric. "That there are other people out there that care about my dad and want him to eat healthy and make him a home-cooked meal. God's Love has kind of brought my dad and me into this family and has given him incredible meals that really changed his life in such a wonderful way."

Eric normally visits his father as often as he can. Last year, they celebrated Herbert's birthday together with his God's Love cake. But this year, Eric fears that won't be possible. Due to COVID-19, Eric and his wife have made the very difficult decision to practice social distancing and stop visiting Herbert to ensure his health and safety. While they miss him dearly, they feel so much relief knowing that God's Love We Deliver is delivering; and they know Herbert feels that relief, too.

# Current and Emerging Needs in the Wake of COVID-19



NMDC SUPERVISOR  
JESUS NIEVES WITH  
SHELF-STABLE MEAL BAG

Cooking and home-delivering medically tailored meals for the most vulnerable people in NYC is more important than ever during this unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of our clients are seniors, many live alone, and all are living with one or more underlying conditions such as cancer, renal disease, and cardiovascular disease. Our home-delivered meal program is essential to their well-being.

God's Love remains open, having been deemed an Essential Services Provider by the NYC Office of Emergency Management. Our phones are ringing off the hook with increased requests for meals. We are adjusting our production plan to accommodate growth in our volunteer-driven program while taking every precaution to minimize risk to clients, volunteers and staff.

The normal weekly demand for our program has increased five-fold. As we race to add up to 1,500 new clients to our program, here is what we are doing to maintain operations and reach as many people as possible in this very challenging environment:

- **Shelf-stable food.** We have delivered 21 days of shelf-stable food to all clients in addition to our regular meal delivery in case our service is disrupted
- **Reaching more clients.** We are ramping up operations to provide meals to more than 1,500 new clients, preparing up to 4,000 additional meals per day by the fall
- **Temporary staff.** We are hiring additional delivery, kitchen, office, facilities, and meal packaging staff to meet rapid growth
- **Additional cleaning.** We have increased the number of facilities staff who now clean the entire building multiple times a day
- **Laptops and iPads.** We are purchasing additional equipment to ensure more staff can work remotely
- **Delivery vans.** We are adding more refrigerated vans to our fleet which will be necessary at this time of incredible growth

We are committed to doing all we can to ensure our vulnerable neighbors have the nutrition they need to stay healthy and safe. Thank you to all those who have helped support this important work.

If you would like to fund any of the above efforts, we thank you, and ask that you reach out to David Ludwigson at [dludwigson@glwd.org](mailto:dludwigson@glwd.org). Thank you for your ongoing support.

## KITCHEN & NUTRITION

### Cooking through the Crisis

BY DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION SERVICES, LISA ZULLIG, MS, RDN, CSG, CDN AND EXECUTIVE CHEF DANIEL METZGER

The COVID-19 pandemic requires revisions to our medically tailored meal program which pose huge challenges for our program staff.

For example, social distancing in kitchen volunteer shifts means fewer volunteers, but we are cooking more meals than ever. To expand production so quickly, our kitchen and nutrition teams created a streamlined menu plan that requires fewer hands. The revised menu retains some delicious client favorites, such as Stuffed Portobello Mushroom, and Coconut Curry Chicken. And of course, the menu plan continues to ensure that our clients receive the right amount of calories and protein.

Our chefs report that the kitchen volunteers have risen to the challenge of our increased production. "Everyone realizes that what is going on is bigger than us," says Sous Chef Andre Daquigan. "We all want to be here for our neighbors who are most vulnerable right now."

Our meals are nutritious, but we still make sure that each meal ends with something sweet. We have temporarily outsourced the baking of desserts to our long-time, trusted catering partner, Canard Inc. Canard chefs bake more than 12,000 desserts every week to our



CHEF CURTIS

specifications and deliver them daily to God's Love. And of course, we're still sending birthday cakes, because we believe that it's always important to put time aside for celebrations.

Registered Dietitian Nutritionists have been working remotely, ensuring the safest environment possible for our staff. With so much growth, we recruited former God's Love RDNs from across the country who know our program and our clients and are now assisting us part-time, remotely. We now have dietitians, both current and former employees who want to help, answering our clients' phone calls in New York, Florida, and Wisconsin.

Our staff are working harder than ever, but with new sources of assistance, great volunteers, streamlined production plans, and strong support from the community, we can meet the needs of our rapidly expanding clientele.



**GOD'S LOVE  
WE DELIVER®**

# Thank you for your support during COVID-19

We are grateful for so many supporters that have joined us as ambassadors, in partnership, and/or renewed or increased their support with financial and in-kind gifts as we adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the following (list as of 6/30/20).\*

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**VOLUNTEER VINICIO CRUZ**

## Volunteers Rally

When God's Love was declared an Essential Service Provider during the COVID-19 pandemic, various State of Emergency protocols took effect. Guided by the CDC, as well as NYS and NYC guidelines, the Volunteer Department implemented protocols to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our volunteers, clients and staff.

Volunteers were alerted to changes in kitchen hours, meal prep, delivery, volunteers per shift, and check-in and out times. We temporarily suspended our baking and 6pm-8pm shifts to put all kitchen effort into cooking to meet the ever-growing need. Volunteers register online and receive a call to be pre-screened with COVID-19 questions. At the building, volunteers are asked another series of questions.

They are directed immediately to the lobby's hand sanitizer station and are instructed to wash their hands before and again after their shift. During their shift, volunteers are given gloves and a mask. We are grateful to every volunteer for taking these safety measures seriously for their safety, the safety of the other volunteers, and the safety of our clients!

To help alleviate concerns and maintain compliance, we hired staff members just to enforce social distancing. Work areas in the kitchen and meal packing areas have been marked with the appropriate measures of distance. Delivery staff and volunteers knock on a client's door, walk 6 feet away, and wait to see the client open the door. They are then able to share a few moments with the client while honoring social distancing.

God's Love is grateful for the ongoing and caring commitment of volunteers to our clients and mission.

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**THE MISSION OF GOD'S LOVE WE DELIVER** is to improve the health and well-being of men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other serious illnesses by alleviating hunger and malnutrition. We prepare and deliver nutritious, high-quality meals to people who, because of their illness, are unable to provide or prepare meals for themselves. We also provide illness-specific nutrition education and counseling to our clients, families, care providers and other service organizations. All of our services are provided free of charge to clients without regard to income.

### GOD'S LOVE WE DELIVER

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