



PROJECT BREAD.ORG

NEWS *feeding people, nourishing hope* Fall 2011

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Helping families put food on the table

Known as the “food stamp lady” by her clients, Amy De La Cruz is an outreach worker in Chelsea and Boston for Project Bread. Her job: help increase participation in SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps.

Food stamps have become a critical safety net program in a still-struggling economy beset by high unemployment, fewer opportunities, and stagnating wages, said De La Cruz, 26, who visits health and social service centers encouraging people to apply for the program. But for many of her clients, working people who have always made it on their own, accepting such help is not easy.

“It’s heartbreaking. A lot of people find it hard to hold back tears,” she said. “They’re stuck in something so horrific they can’t see the light.”

Do you have an experience with a family or individual that makes you say, “This is why I do what I do?”

Today I spoke with a 35-year-old single mom from Haiti who was finding it hard to find a job because she was pregnant. She is paying for rent and utilities with her savings, but her money is dwindling down. It was music to her ears to hear that she would be able to receive help getting food for her two young children.



Photo © Joshua Touster

Written by Cindy Atoji Keene, Globe Correspondent; printed with permission of The Boston Globe

What drew you to this kind of outreach program?

After college, I was a volunteer in Honduras, helping to alleviate malnutrition among villagers. I came back to the U.S. to find that hunger is also very real here.

How many applications do you fill out monthly on behalf of your clients?

Project Bread processes about 218 applications a month. As with many government-run programs, the qualification requirements can be complex. But there are a lot of myths. Some immigrants say things like, “I don’t want the government to take my children. . . .” In reality, noncitizens and their families can qualify for the program. It’s separate from the immigration process.

What’s the hardest part of your job?

Not always being able to provide as much as I would like to. People tell me their life stories, and they don’t just have issues with food insecurity; it’s abuse, money, child care dilemmas, and a whole list of problems. Some just need someone to talk with and help them figure out the next step.

Do you hate throwing away food ?

I do. I yell at my niece and sister and scold them, “Take only what you are going to eat. So many people in this country would love to have that food.”



Photo © Tom Hannan

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“This economy is particularly hard on low-income children, who need healthy food to thrive and learn.”



Amy De La Cruz, shown here at the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center.

Staff Photo

For Holiday Cards, Call 617-723-5000

www.projectbread.org





Project Bread has launched an exciting, new version of its www.gettingSNAP.org website!*

The new design features easy-to-use navigational tools, comprehensive information about SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps) in both English and Spanish, an improved version of the original eligibility calculator to estimate benefits, as well as a chat feature that enables visitors to live text (IM) in either English or Spanish with Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline counselors.



The new website design also features a new train-the-trainer feature.

This is a resource for counselors who participate in SNAP outreach and assistance. It offers a curriculum on food insecurity, SNAP benefits, regulations, verifications, pre-screening, and SNAP application assistance. **Check it out!**

SNAP is a federal nutrition program that helps people buy the nutritious food they need for good health. It is the cornerstone of our country's nutrition safety net and is effective in preventing and alleviating food insecurity and hunger. These new tools will go a long way to connect our most vulnerable clients to this valuable food resource. In 2010, we had 659,872 unique visitors to the site, and we plan to increase that number to help even more people in need!



Amy De La Cruz works with a client seeking SNAP information.

*GettingSNAP.org and the SNAP Trainer were funded in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance.

Rockettes!

7NEWS and the Rockettes partner to benefit Project Bread at a special performance of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular! Kick up your heels and join the holiday spirit on Wednesday, December 14, at the Citi Performing Arts Center! A portion of the proceeds from that evening's show goes directly to Project Bread's mission to feed hungry families in Massachusetts. For a 10% discount on tickets, visit www.projectbread.org/rockettes.



Striking Out Hunger!



As this newsletter goes to press, Project Bread is holding its third annual bowl-a-thon on November 15th at Jillian's/Lucky Strike Boston. JAM'N 94.5 DJ's Ramiro and Pebbles will emcee and show off their bowling skills with the rest of their JAM'N team. Teams raise a minimum of \$650 per lane. This fun event is supported by corporate sponsor, iBasis. For more info, go to www.projectbread.org/strikeouthunger.

Homerun for Hunger

All season long, each time a Boston Red Sox player got a hit during a Friday night home game, Whole Foods Market donated \$100 to Project Bread! Before a sold-out crowd on Thursday, September 15, Project Bread staff member, Ryan Lee, accepted a check for \$13,400 from Whole Foods and the crowd went wild! Thank you to Whole Foods Market, WEEI Sports Radio, and The Red Sox for helping us end hunger!



Shown from left to right: Wally the Green Monster, Bill McGowen, director of purchasing, Whole Foods, with son, Christopher McGowen, Ryan Lee, senior development associate, Project Bread, Jon Mulshenock, account executive, WEEI Sports Radio Network, and Dana Panepinto, director of sports sales, WEEI Sports Radio Network.

Food Day, October 24

Project Bread celebrated national Food Day by teaming up with the Commissioner of Agricultural Research, Scott J. Soares, and Governor Deval Patrick at The Food Project in Lincoln to launch the Massachusetts Gleaning Network by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR). Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or from fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. The food goes to emergency food programs. Both The Food Project and the Boston Area Gleaners, who harvested the food, are supported by Project Bread.



Gov. Deval Patrick and Ellen Parker at The Food Project for Food Day gleaning

Harvester Award

On November 3rd, Project Bread received a 2011 Harvester Award from the Worcester County Food Bank.

Game Night

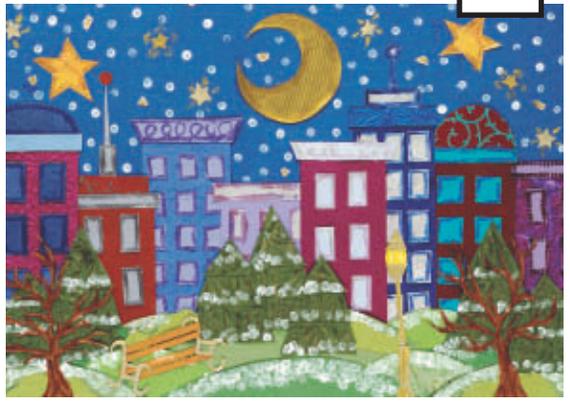
Support Project Bread on Sat., December 10, at the VIP Premiere Party of the new Braintree Dave & Buster's! Tickets are \$25 and all the proceeds help the hungry. Go to www.projectbread.org/daveandbusters for details.



For the latest, go to www.projectbread.org.

PROJECT BREAD HOLIDAY CARDS

New! 



Starry Night

Wishing you all the delights of the season!

By sending beautiful Project Bread holiday cards this holiday season, you will be helping hungry children and families in Massachusetts. Each of our beautiful new 5 x 7" holiday cards were designed by local artists and come in packs of ten. Cards are printed in Massachusetts on high-quality recycled paper using soy-based inks and are a pleasure to give and receive. Samples of the cards are available upon request.

New! 



BACK OF CARDS

Project Bread's mission is to alleviate, prevent, and ultimately end hunger in Massachusetts. Proceeds from Project Bread holiday cards help feed hungry children and families in our neighborhoods and hometowns.

Family Outing

Make way for the holidays!

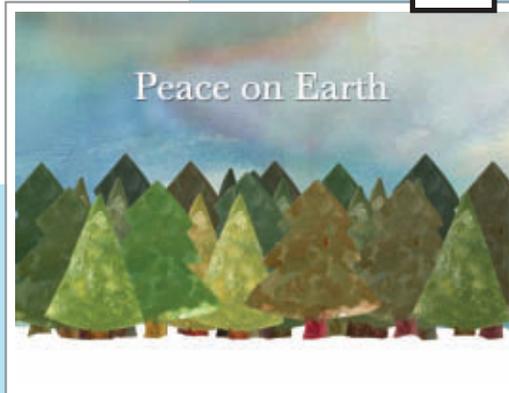
New! 



Peace on Earth

Wishing you quiet moments of peace and contentment.

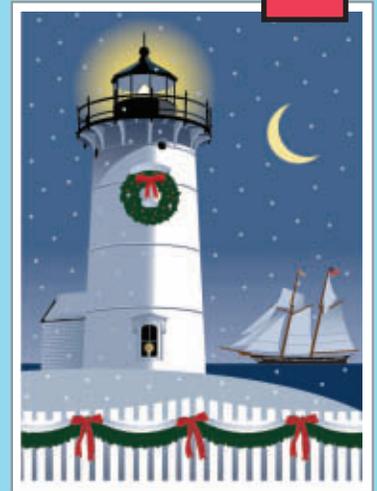
New! 



Winter Wonderland

May the beauty of the season surround and delight you.

New! 



Tribute Cards

Choose from a wide selection of e-cards or printed and personalized greeting cards to make a donation in honor of a friend, family member, colleague, or client. Your gift will help feed hungry children and families across Massachusetts. Visit www.projectbread.org/holidaycards under "Tribute Gifts."

Want more options?

For more holiday card designs, or to send an e-card, please visit www.projectbread.org/holidaycards.

Holiday Card Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

MasterCard/Visa _____ Exp. _____
Amex/Discover _____
(circle one)

Please make checks payable to:

Project Bread-The Walk for Hunger
145 Border Street, East Boston, MA 02128-1903
Fax: 617-248-8877 | Phone Orders: 617-723-5000



Lighthouse Lights

May good wishes light your way home this holiday season.

Card Style	# of Sets	Cost per Set with tax	Total
Starry Night		\$15.00	
Winter Wonderland		15.00	
Family Outing		15.00	
Peace on Earth		15.00	
Lighthouse Lights		15.00	
Shipping & Handling			5.00
Additional tax-deductible donation, THANK YOU!			
Total Enclosed			

10 CARDS PER SET

Don't Delay—Call or Fax Today! Or Order Online at
www.projectbread.org/holidaycards.

To receive holiday cards by December 24, order by December 18.

Every year, Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline takes almost 50,000 calls from people in need of food. We recently brought together our hotline counselors — some of whom have been with the organization for eleven years — to tell us about what new things they're hearing.

Hearing the Voice of Hunger



Photo © Tom Hannon



Staff photo

Q: What has been one of the most surprising or troubling things you've heard from your clients in the recent past?

"We hear from more young adults who are homeless — some callers are as young as 18. This is a new age group for us."

"There is a new kind of homelessness. These are people who are not 'chronically homeless' but those who've lost their home recently. They are now sleeping on someone's couch."

"We're hearing from more single people without children between the ages of 20 and 35. It's particularly difficult for them to call because they aren't calling for their kids but for themselves. I sense their shame."

"There are fewer programs for adults without children and elders who can't get to a food pantry or are just over the income guideline for SNAP — even by a few cents. It's really hard to have to tell people they are not eligible for help."

"When you tell someone that she makes slightly too much money, she feels even more shame — like she shouldn't have called. But we say 'no,' it's because the income guidelines are too low!"

"If people can't find a job for a long time, I tell them that it doesn't mean there is something wrong with them."

Q: What is one of the most hopeful or creative ways in which you have seen your clients coping with their challenges?

"People are trying so hard to work more — two jobs, even — and they can't find one."

"On the one hand, families are becoming more multigenerational because they are moving in with one another. However, we also hear of people who are pulling their kids out of college or sending them to a community college."

Q: What are the changes in the content of conversations you have had since the economic downturn?

"There is more embarrassment. It can come out as anger sometimes. There are more people who never thought they'd be in this situation and there is a lot of shame about needing to have to ask for help."

"More people need to tell us what they used to have — a home, cars, their own business, and how they used to donate to food pantries."



Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline 1-800-645-8333

All photos © Joshua Touster, except where noted

Q: Are you noticing any trends or patterns across clients with regard to problems or solutions?

"We've had a huge increase in calls overall . . . and an increase in people calling who are older — maybe 58 — unemployed for two years, no savings left, no unemployment left, highly educated, have always worked, and no one wants to hire them!"

"The number of callers with 'no income' is so much higher than it used to be — especially with unemployment benefits running out."

"There are more elders calling with part-time jobs: I just talked to a woman, age 88, who was trying to work and piece things together."

"Our callers are not the typical two-parent family or single-mom-with-kids anymore. There are more single dads with kids, or kids who have no parent because the parent died and another relative is taking care of them."

"The percent of people who are calling about SNAP [food stamps] is much greater. These are people who are needing a long-term solution."

"Solutions for rural and city hunger are different. In the city, the caller is more anonymous but programs are accessible. In remote areas, people have to travel farther and can't always get to them."

"Callers are used to getting an automated response on the phone — a list of numbers with recorded responses. They're screaming out their reality but, you get the sense, no one is listening."

Q: If you could change or add anything to the set of solutions you have to offer to your clients, what would it be?

"Change the minds of people who criticize SNAP. It keeps people from asking for help."

"Get rid of the shelter cap."

Q: What is the saddest thing you hear?

"That people wait too long to ask for help. They spend down their savings, tap out their friends and family, sometimes lose their home, and finally, they call."

When hungry people need food, where do they turn for help? In Massachusetts, the answer is Project Bread's toll-free FoodSource Hotline. With its ability to help callers in 160 languages, the hotline uses a state-of-the-art database to refer callers to emergency hunger relief organizations in their own neighborhood. Project Bread's hotline counselors can also assist callers in applying for SNAP (formerly food stamps) and direct them to school meals, meals for the elderly, food co-ops, and farmers' markets.

FoodSource Hotline 1-800-645-8333



Staff Photo

Grants for Food

Using the money raised from the 43rd Walk for Hunger, Project Bread has awarded grants to over 450 emergency food programs in 129 communities across Massachusetts. The funds support food pantries, meal programs, food banks, food salvage programs, and other community organizations providing hunger relief. The emergency food programs funded by Project Bread reported serving 62.5 million meals to those in need in the last year. "As many people continue to face economic hardship," said Ellen Parker, executive director of Project Bread, "it's essential that we provide these programs with the food they need to help."



Joanne Barry, the executive director at A Place to Turn in Natick, explains why receiving the grant is so important to her community, "We have seen so many new families coming in this year. With the Project Bread grant, we are purchasing a lot of healthy food perishables we couldn't otherwise buy. With Project Bread's help, we are fighting hunger in the community and keeping people aware of the issue."

Project Bread will present the latest data and findings about the state of hunger in Massachusetts in its 2011 *Status Report on Hunger*, due out this month. For a complete listing of funded agencies, please visit www.projectbread.org/fundedagencies.

PROJECTBREAD.ORG



THE WALK FOR HUNGER

145 Border Street, East Boston, MA 02128-1903
Tel 617 723 5000 | info@projectbread.org

Non-profit
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PAID
Boston, MA
Permit No. 53374

Ways to Help



7NEWS Holiday Helpings

Want to know what your favorite 7NEWS celebrities cook for their own holiday gatherings?

7NEWS kicks off its Holiday Recipe Campaign in time for Thanksgiving. Donate at www.projectbread.org/7NEWS and you'll receive the favorite recipes of 7NEWS anchors, reporters, meteorologists, and sports personalities as a special thank you! Good food and a good cause!

Whole Foods Helps

During December, shoppers at participating Whole Foods Markets across the state can support Project Bread through the "Give Bread" program. Just add donation coupons in the amount of \$2 and \$5 to your grocery bill and you'll help feed the hungry! Check out our display of holiday cards as well.

Rodney Strong on Giving

This holiday season, Project Bread is partnering with Rodney Strong Wine Estates to do some good for hungry people. For every bottle of wine sold during November and December at a local retailer near you, Rodney Strong will donate \$1 to Project Bread, anticipating that this will provide 14,000 meals during the holiday season.



Holiday Spoons Project



Get your school, family, youth or religious group involved in our annual Holiday Spoons Project. Your group can decorate wooden spoons, enter a contest, and learn about the issue of hunger and how your efforts help those in need. Jordan's Furniture will match every dollar you raise up to \$10,000 — doubling your efforts to help hungry children and families in Massachusetts. For more information, visit www.projectbread.org/spoons.