



Cathedral Kitchen News

ISSUE #01
2022



Two meal guests enjoy a hot meal indoors.

Dear Friends,

I am happy to share that since I last wrote, we have welcomed meal guests back into our dining room for the first time in two years! We held our grand re-opening of the dining room on March 30th, celebrating with live jazz music, mascots from local sports teams and, of course, a special meal. It has been wonderful for me, the rest of the staff and volunteers to again welcome guests indoors and to witness their reaction to the changes made to the dining room while it was closed. Guests have expressed their delight at the restaurant-like appearance of the room, greater space between chairs and tables and the ability to choose where they sit. As word spread, more guests have chosen to eat their meal in the dining room instead of taking it to-go. Approximately 75 guests choose to eat in the dining room each day, while the rest of the guests, usually an additional 225+ take their meal to-go.

One of the great benefits of having guests back in the dining room is that they stay longer, which enables our Empowerment Coaches, Shelley and Beck, to have more time to build rapport with guests and help them with their needs. For example, a guest came forward last week to confide in Beck that she was being sexually trafficked. By having the ability to build trust with this guest in need, Beck was able to connect her to a safe house operated by one of our on-site partners, Center for Family Services (CFS). Beck drove the guest to an arranged safe location where CFS staff picked her up and took her to the house that evening, resulting in a life changing outcome!

During the last several months we have also experienced a significant increase in people coming for meals and services as the cost of fuel, food and other essentials continues to rise. During the first four months of 2022, we have served 33% more meals as compared to the same period in 2021. During this same time period we continue to face supply chain challenges, resulting in our receiving less donated protein and produce than in the past. We rely on these in-kind donations to keep our food purchasing costs down. As a result, we are spending more on food than we did last year so that we can keep the meals delicious and well balanced (continued on page 2).



Philadelphia Union mascot makes a special appearance during our grand reopening.

CK continues to meet growing demand...

In May 2022, CK provided 50% more meals and groceries to those in need in our community than in May 2021!

Cathedral Kitchen Board of Directors

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Founded in 1976, the Cathedral Kitchen is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Mission Statement

Cathedral Kitchen's mission is to help people out of food insecurity and champion their pursuit of stability and prosperity.

Federal Identification Number
22-3114500

United Way Agency Code
18099

Combined Federal Campaign Agency Code
18099

Cathedral Kitchen

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A member of



Letter from the Executive Director, continued...



Left: Guests are able to choose where they sit in our new restaurant-style dining room.



Right: Students from Creative Arts High School provide live music during our grand reopening.

We sincerely hope you will continue to support CK if you have in the past, or that you will consider starting to support our efforts so that together, we can continue to help people on their journey out of food insecurity and champion their pursuit of stability and prosperity.

You can find out more about how we do this by reading the other stories in this newsletter.

I hope you have a happy and healthy summer.

Thank you,

Carrie Kitchen-Santiago

Carrie Kitchen-Santiago
Executive Director

Welcome Lisa Folks to CK's Board of Directors



CK would like to welcome a new addition to our Board of Directors! Lisa Folks is a Camden native who has been heavily involved with CK for many years. Lisa attended Camden County Community College where she earned her AS in Business Administration. After that, she went on to the Wharton School of Business where she earned her BS in Management. She then attended Louisiana State University in Shreveport and earned her MS in Nonprofit Management. Lisa has over 35 years of banking experience and is currently the Community

Specialist Sector Vice President for her branch with PNC Financial Services Group. With this experience, she has been valuable to CK teaching financial literacy classes for our Culinary and Baking Arts Training Program. Lisa does not stop there, as she is an individual who volunteers with our meal service, which gives her an even better understanding of what we do to provide for the community. She has also been instrumental in securing funding from PNC to support our Culinary and Baking Arts Training Program and sponsor our annual Harvest for Hunger event.

When Lisa was asked how CK is meaningful to her she told us the following, "As the oldest of seven children raised in Camden, my family often experienced food insecurity. I recognize the impact of CK's services, specifically the respectful provision of meals for the food insecure, supportive social service recommendations, and tools to become self-sufficient through their training programs. CK's mission further represents the work that I am honored to support at PNC."

Mike*, age 36, had a history of alcohol and drug addiction and had been sleeping on a local street. He had been coming to meals at CK for several months and began to establish rapport with our staff. With time and establishing trust, he started sleeping on our front porch each night. Every morning, our facilities maintenance team member, Harris Pearson, would greet Mike with a cup of hot coffee and provide any personal care items he needed. Before leaving work each day, Harris would make sure Mike had a blanket. Harris suggested that Mike meet with CK's Empowerment Coach, Alex (Shelley) Shellenberger. She connected Mike to services, such as where to shower and counseling services, to help ease the hardship of living on the street.

Maryville, an addiction treatment center, is one of our partner agencies that attends our meal service every Wednesday to provide services for our guests. Mike was in our dining room one week when their counselors, Richard and Lisa, were present. Mike built up enough courage to ask Shelley to introduce him to them. Lisa and Richard sat with Mike for a casual conversation over the meal and listened to his story. He shared that he had "hit bottom" and was ready to enter a detox program. At the time, Maryville's residential facility was full. Lisa and Richard did not hesitate to assist Mike and they identified another agency, John Brooks Recovery Center, which had space. The next morning, Shelley set Mike up with an Uber ride and he entered the month-long program.

A few weeks later, Mike called to wish the CK staff and Maryville counselors a Happy Easter and tell everyone he "loved us" for helping him out. He shared that he had cleared detox, was now living in their short-term unit, and was looking forward to a sober living lifestyle.



Above top: CK's front porch has been a "safe" spot for many of our guests experiencing homelessness.

Bottom: Maryville Counselors Lisa and Richard, helped Mike navigate a path to sobriety.



At the completion of Mike's treatment, he came back to visit everyone at CK, and brought along his young adult son, whom he had recently reunited with. No one recognized Mike when he arrived, he looked amazing! He and his son sat down in the dining room and had dinner with Shelley and Harris. He was living with his brother and had secured a full-time job at a restaurant. He said it was good to be working and stay busy. The restaurant had so much work for him and they really valued his work ethic. He promised to stay in touch.

Harris' kind gesture each morning enabled him to make a personal connection with Mike, and as a result, change his life. We are deeply grateful to Lisa and Richard at Maryville, who did not think about their admission goals, just sobriety for someone who needed it.

**name has been changed*

Mike, right, came back to CK to thank Harris (left) and Shelley (center) for their kindness and support.

Chef Jason is on a Mission



From left to right: Adam, Moe, Chef Jason, and Philly place product in our refrigerated container used for storage.

Chef Jason Hall joined Cathedral Kitchen's team last fall as Director of Kitchen Operations. With 27 years of kitchen experience, his first job was washing dishes in his family's restaurant, DiDonato's Villa in Vineland. He went on to study culinary arts at the Institute of Technology and the Academy of Culinary Arts. Prior to coming to CK, Chef Jason was the Executive Chef and Banquet Manager at the Pitman Golf Course and Tomasello Winery.

As CK's Director of Kitchen Operations, Chef Jason oversees the purchasing and intake of more than \$1.8 million worth of food annually, in addition to paper goods, such as take-away containers and disposable bags. Chef Jason is helping CK adapt to meet the latest challenges such as the long-term effects of the pandemic, rising inflation, and the organization's social responsibility to the environment.

We sat down with Chef Jason and asked him about his experience at CK over the past eight months.

CK: As a professionally trained chef, working at a non-profit organization must be very different from previous jobs. What drew you to CK?

JH: When the pandemic began, I volunteered on a project that made meals for school children who were not receiving their free school lunches. I wrote a grant for funding and really enjoyed the opportunity to make a difference in so many people's lives. I never thought I would be able to find a job that would combine my volunteer efforts with my background, so when the job appeared at CK it was as if it was meant to be.

CK: How has inflation impacted CK over the past few months?

JH: Inflation is affecting all of us, and the people we serve are the hardest hit. We have seen a real increase in the number of people who come to CK for meals and groceries. Last year we served an average of 180 guests at the weekly Market Stand. Last week, that number was 288. The demand from the community is growing too. We deliver groceries to twelve community partners in Camden who serve families, senior citizens and people in need. This allows us to get deeper into the community to combat food insecurity.

While the demand for our services is increasing, inflation is affecting us as an organization too. Our food donations are down, especially protein, so we are purchasing more food when grocery prices are as high as they've been since the last recession in the early 80's. We are so grateful to our donors whose generosity enables us to continue to meet the need and not cut back on services.

CK: In addition to inflation, what other challenges does CK face?

JH: Some of the other challenges I actually enjoy – strategy and spatial arrangement. I love playing chess and Tetris and I like to joke that they are a lot like my job. We often have to place orders for food donations weeks ahead, I need to plan where we will store pallets of food, manage expiration dates, and plan for what we will need later each month. We try to assemble products each week that complement one another to make a meal, such as pancake mix with syrup, pasta with sauce, or tuna fish with mayonnaise and bread.

We are really fortunate to have two shipping containers that were donated, one for non-perishables and the other for frozen foods. They both get filled and emptied each week. To give you an idea of the quantity, each week we receive about three tons of non-perishable food that we distribute through our meals, Market Stand, and outreach.

(continued on next page)

CK: What's your favorite part of your job?

JH: This is a two-part answer. First is working with the CK staff. I have never had such a dedicated and hard-working team that is always ready to pitch in. Tractor trailer trucks will show up, sometimes unexpected, with tons of food each day. It's all hands-on deck to unload and move the product to the right place - between one of our two buildings, the two container boxes, and onto our trucks to deliver out into the community. It's heavy lifting and the team is always there, making it happen.

And second is working the Market Stand each week. The guests are so appreciative of the food we offer, its quality and variety. When a guest comes up to the counter, we ask if they have a kitchen because we have different bags assembled for people who do not have refrigerators or the ability to cook. We also ask if they are a family because they receive double the quantity of bags.

I have gotten to know so many of the guests and their preferences. One gentleman who comes each week has serious dental issues. I always try to set aside a loaf of soft bread for him rather than rolls or loaves with hard crusts. Another guest has a cat so I try to make sure she receives a can of tunafish.

CK: With the volume of meals and groceries that CK distributes each year, how will the state's ban on plastic bags affect the organization and what else is CK doing to "go green"?

JH: As a non-profit organization, we are grateful to have received an extension to eliminate plastic bags. This gives us some more time to figure out how we can continue to distribute groceries and take-away bags of sandwiches and snacks each day. The plastic bags we used in the past cost a penny each or were often donated. We have been testing a variety of biodegradable bags and have found one that is durable so that it doesn't tear when wet. It will cost about \$0.07 each which is a great expense when dealing with such large numbers.

We always try to find the most cost effective and environmentally friendly option for our operations. When our dining room reopened for indoor seating in March, we started serving guests on real dishes, with silverware and glassware, eliminating the single-use paper products we had previously used. We also purchase bio-degradable containers for our guests who choose to take their meal to-go and we partner with a local recycling company, Organic Diversion, who recycles our food waste into animal waste and compost..

Harvest for Hunger 2022



***Join us back in-person for a night of bidding,
food, drinks, and fun!***

New Location:

Lucien's Ballroom

November 3rd 2022 | 6:00 - 9:00 PM

Register now to receive alerts and updates!

Visit www.ckharvest2022.givesmart.com or

text [ckharvest2022](https://www.ckharvest2022.givesmart.com) to 76278

We are looking for sponsors and prizes to auction!

If interested, please visit the website above or email harvest@cathedralkitchen.org

Volunteer Highlight



CK's Culinary and Baking Arts training course is designed to instruct students in the skills needed to obtain employment in the culinary industry. There is a large focus on culinary skills, but there is also time dedicated to job readiness; covering topics like professionalism, interviews, resumes, and more. We would not be able to cover this area in its entirety without the help of our volunteers.

Volunteer groups from Human Resource departments at companies, including Virtua and Subaru, have come out to assist students with creating and editing their resumes. This is extremely important as many of our students have never had a resume, or the means to create one. The volunteers then conduct mock interviews with each individual student, allowing the students plenty of practice without the pressure that comes with having a job on the line. They are provided helpful interview and job searching tips, along with plenty of encouragement, as they prepare for the real thing.

These volunteers provide our students with invaluable resources and skills that may very well be the difference in landing a job after graduation. We are grateful to the volunteers from Virtua and Subaru, along with all of our volunteers, for their continued support. We could not do this without you!

Left: Volunteers from Subaru (top) and Virtua (bottom) conduct mock interviews with students.

"Volunteering at Cathedral Kitchen feels so impactful. Being able to connect with the students in the culinary program, offer valuable interviewing skills to help them succeed and directly impact our city feels incredible. What feels even better than that is the chance to connect and learn from one another. Cathedral Kitchen has created a welcoming environment to everyone who comes through their doors, including volunteers."

Caitlin Baker - Learning Strategy Manager, Subaru



Along with volunteer groups such as Virtua and Subaru, we also would like to thank our individual volunteer tutors that come on a consistent basis every semester to help students prepare for their ServSafe exam. ServSafe is a challenging national food safety exam that is highly regarded in the food industry, an exam that all of our students take midway through the semester. Every week leading up to the exam, the students participate in tutoring sessions and practice exams that help them prepare for the real thing.



Over the past 12 years, 472 students have passed the ServSafe exam. This would not be possible without the time put in by our volunteer tutors. Many of the tutors are former educators, and spend many hours developing relationships with the students, instilling knowledge and good studying practices.

Left top: Volunteer tutors John Taulane, Lynn Lafferty Dougherty, Susan Kupersmith, & Tom Venables.

Bottom: Tutor Emily Capella goes over testing material with a student.

Hector Amengual graduated from our Culinary and Baking Fall 2021 class, and was known among CK staff, volunteers, and peers for his dedication and hard work. He took initiative when needed, and never complained, no matter the task. Hector graduated with the award for Outstanding and Hardworking student and, in addition, was chosen as the recipient of the Chef Jonathan Jernigan Apprenticeship. After his apprenticeship ended, it was an easy decision for CK to hire him as a full time-employee.

When speaking to the Winter 2022 graduating class at their graduation, Hector said "I never imagined that I would be standing in front of a group of people, giving a speech." Prior to entering the program in Fall 2021, Hector was a resident of the Volunteers of America Reentry Program at Hope Hall in Camden. Hope Hall is a facility that provides services, and assists with reentry, to individuals who are incarcerated and eligible for parole within 24 months. While at Hope Hall, Hector saw a flyer for the Culinary Program and decided to give it a shot, if only at first for a chance to get out of Hope Hall for a bit. "When I first entered Hope Hall, I thought my life was over," Hector explains, "but while attending the culinary training program, I saw how it could change my life for the better. It provided me skills that will always be in demand, and I'll have a job that will always put a smile on someone's face. I saw my life in a different light."



Hector with his teammate Sheila and their winning pasta competition dish.

After serving a 10-year sentence, Hector was discharged from Hope Hall and was able to smoothly transition back into the community with the help of CK. Culinary Arts Training Coordinator, Ja'Net Dingle, MSW, was able to assist Hector with housing and obtained vouchers to help him cover his security deposit and first month's rent. CK staff provided him with donations to help furnish his apartment. Ja'Net also helped Hector with obtaining his state ID.

Through it all, Hector has become a valuable member of the Kitchen team. His determination and hard work have paid off. "The program and CK changed my outlook on life," Hector says, "it showed me I had the potential to become somebody."

CK's Outreach into the Community



PRUP families are grateful for CK's weekly groceries.

For many years, Cathedral Kitchen has been providing meals and groceries to those in the community who may not be able to get to our dining room during meal service. This need increased significantly during the pandemic, which in turn allowed us to form new partnerships with nearby churches, food pantries, and non-profits serving low-income families and seniors.

One of our partnerships in the community is with PRUP, Puerto Rican Unity for Progress. PRUP is a multi-service organization that serves low-income Camden County residents with emphasis on the Hispanic population. They provide bilingual services such as job readiness skills, housing referrals, health and nutrition initiatives, senior empowerment, education, and youth programs to those in the community.

CK provides both meals and groceries to PRUP. Their youth program, which assists at risk Camden youth and provides afterschool services, receives meals from CK multiple times a week. Every Wednesday, PRUP holds a drive-up food distribution, where groceries from CK and other organizations are provided to families in the community. In 2021, the organization received 1,455 meals from CK, along with groceries for 3,300 families. As of April, CK has provided 990 meals and delivered groceries for 2,550 individuals so far this year.

"We are thankful for everything Cathedral Kitchen has done in helping our community, especially here in South Camden. It is a great relationship, and as you can see (by the line of people waiting to receive groceries) very much appreciated by the families here."

– Rick Camacho, PRUP Executive Director

CK Café Pop Up & Catering

TAKE A PHOTO OF YOUR MEAL AND TAG US FOR A \$5 COUPON!*

Every week, dinners will be available at a location near you, preorder your reheatable dinner for 4 and pick up where we pop up!

CK CAFE POP-UP

BEEF TENDERLOIN

Peppercorn Crusted Beef Tenderloin
Dijon Potato Salad and Greens
Garlic Bread
Dessert

\$60!
SERVES 4

PICK UP AT:
Double Nickel Brewing Co.
Thursday, June 30
4:00 - 6:00 PM

Your purchase will help provide meals to people in need through the CK Soup Kitchen in Camden, NJ
ckcafepopup.square.site



CK Café Pop-Up is better than ever!

Since our Café has been temporarily closed, we've been selling reheatable dinners for 4 at various South Jersey locations every week!

With your help, these meals have been supplementing lost income from our Café. If you haven't tried one, check out up-coming menu items below and give it a try. Many folks keep coming back each week for these delicious meals prepared by our Kitchen team.

Plus you don't have to cook, and proceeds help provide meals to people in need, so it's a win-win.

To order, please visit www.ckcafepopup.square.site

Preorders will take place Fridays: 4:00 PM - Wednesdays: 9:00 PM

Pickup will be every Thursday: 4:00 - 6:00 PM at a specified location.

6/23/2022

Mediterranean Roasted Chicken: \$50
Lentil Salad
Spanakopita (Greek Spinach Pie)
Dessert

Preorders begin: 6/17

6/30/2022

Peppercorn Beef Tenderloin: \$60
Potato Salad and Greens
Garlic Bread
Dessert

Preorders begin: 6/24

7/7/2022

Grilled Chicken Breast with Asian Black Bean Sauce: \$50
Sesame Green Beans
Potstickers
Dessert

Preorders begin: 7/1

Let us cater your next event! If interested, please email Lisa Marco at lisa@cathedralkitchen.org.

Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Cherry Hill, NJ BMEU
Permit No. 192

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