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ST. LOUIS PARK EMERGENCY PROGRAM

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### STEP Accepts Donations

M, W, Th 8 AM-4 PM; Tues. 12 PM-8 PM; Fri. 8 AM-12 PM

## HIGHLIGHTS

STEP would like to thank the following for their recent generous donations:

- St. Louis Park Youth Development Fund
- The Beverly Foundation
- Catholic Community Foundation
- Greater Twin Cities United Way
- Hunger Solutions MN
- Opus Foundation
- Pentair Foundation
- Target Foundation
- Westwood Holiday Fair/Westwood Lutheran Church
- Ronald Fingerhut Family Foundation
- Wayzata Community Church

### Help STEP Reach it's Goal in March

STEP's goal is to raise 100,000 pounds of food and dollars during the MN FoodShare March Campaign. With your donation we can reach this goal.

A Newsletter for Volunteers, Donors and Friends of the St. Louis Park Emergency Program

Spring 2013

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## What does the food from STEP mean to you?

Compiled by Allison Johnson and Karen Clara, Social Workers

We posed a simple question to the families that use the STEP food shelf, "What does the food from STEP mean to you?" The responses were anything but simple. Here is what they told us:

[STEP is] a great benefit. When I am here it feels like family, everyone is so helpful. The food we receive from STEP helps me with my budget being a single mother.

STEP helps me make it through the month. With losing my job, unemployment doesn't make ends meet. By getting help from STEP I am able to get things I can't purchase.

Caring, support, feeling, hope. Thank you.

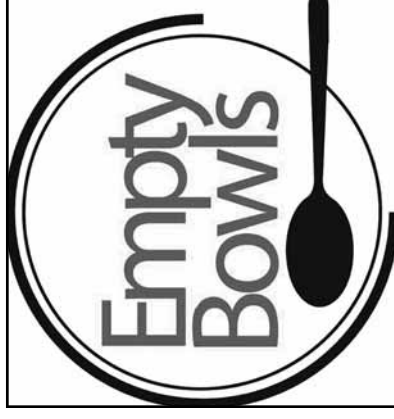
I cannot express my gratitude for the food help, moral support, and resources during the most traumatic period in my life. I hope I can repay or pay it forward one day.



Food continued on page 3

## 13th Annual EMPTY BOWLS Fundraiser

Julie Jergens, Volunteer Coordinator/Food Shelf Manager



**SAVE the DATE!** March is the month of the MN FoodShare Campaign; the time of year when people in our community ask for help in the fight against hunger. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, STEP is holding its 13<sup>th</sup> annual Empty Bowls fundraiser at the SLP Recreation Center.

Empty Bowls is a national grassroots event to fight hunger by hosting a simple meal of soup and bread.

Our largest fundraiser of the year, Empty Bowls helps STEP fill the needs of the hungry in our neighborhood all year long. We will be serving soup and bread donated by local restaurants and new this

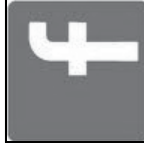
year, "**Soup to Go**" for those who aren't able to linger and enjoy the musical entertainment.

All participants are encouraged to take home a handcrafted bowl made by local artists, students, and community members to remind them of the many empty bowls in our community.

### St. Louis Park Empty Bowls

When: Tuesday, March 7th  
Where: The SLP Recreation Center,  
3700 Monterey Drive  
Lunch served 11 AM to 1:30 PM  
Dinner served 4 PM to 7 PM

## FIND STEP ONLINE!



### FOLLOW STEP ON FACEBOOK

Get updates on needs, events and volunteer options!

[www.facebook.com/STEPslp](http://www.facebook.com/STEPslp)



### DONATE ONLINE

Support STEP through a one-time or monthly donation at [www.giveMN.org](http://www.giveMN.org). Any amount helps!

## CHALLENGE GRANT

This year marks the 15th year of the **Feinstein Foundation** challenge. The **Feinstein Foundation** has given over a million dollars to food support during Food Share month. This year the foundation will match a percentage of all monetary donations made to STEP between March 1st and April 30th. Make your dollars go further—donate to STEP during MN FoodShare Month.

## Notes from STEP's Director

Jackie Olafson, Executive Director

"Food Glorious Food" ... so goes the song from "Oliver." Like the orphans in the show, access to food is forever on the minds of those who need STEP and those of us whose mission it is to keep food on the shelves. An ongoing challenge to be sure, when in the course of any month 45 to 60 thousand pounds of food are distributed to people in St. Louis Park.

Often we are asked where all of the food comes from. Each week food is purchased from one of the local food banks, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest or Emergency Food Network (EFN). A loyal team



of hardy volunteers greet the delivery truck; help break down pallets of food; fill freezers and refrigerators; and prepare the produce for distribution.

Each week I have been overwhelmed by the volume of purchased food needed to provide sufficient quantities to each household. Canned tuna, milk, peanut butter, and rice are four staples that STEP orders each week with a price tag of \$11.00 per household. It becomes daunting to provide a variety of nutritional food at a sustainable cost to STEP.

To help us rise to the challenge, March is designated as Minnesota FoodShare Month. It is a critical time to raise pounds and dollars for STEP. You can help STEP by organizing a food drive in your community or by making a monetary donation.

**Our challenge to the community is to raise 100,000 pounds of food and/or dollars to help with the purchase food.** With your help we can reach this goal!

## STEP Board Welcomes Two New Members

Camille Schroeder, Board Member

The STEP Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of our two newest board members, Curt Rahman and Erin Gonzales-Bardzinski.

Curt Rahman is a business owner in St. Louis Park, and will bring that experience to the board. When asked why he wanted to serve on the board he responded, "Almost everyone in Park knows about STEP and how it is THE safety net for the city. Through my work with Scouting groups and the SLP Public Schools Foundation and just by living and working in this community for 25 years, I got to know STEP, its food shelf functions, and its social work in the community. In addition, my wife, Cindy Jurgensen, has been a driver for STEP for years. So it was very easy for me to say 'Yes' when asked to be on the board."



Erin Gonzales-Bardzinski is a stay-at-home mom with two small children. Erin has a Master's degree in non-profit management, and we are excited for her to bring up-to-date knowledge of the non-profit sector to STEP. In addition, Erin was involved with the Empty Bowls project in 2012, and she is working on the project again this year.

When asked why she wanted to be on the board, she responded, "During graduate school at Hamline University, Jackie Olafson gave me access to STEP for a school project. I was impressed with how efficiently this organization is run. STEP is the heart and soul of our community. The clients served are our next door neighbors. I am grateful that this organization is in St. Louis Park, and I am honored to serve on the board and to serve my community."

## Supporting STEP during the month of March

### Looking for an easy way to donate to STEP?

Check out the STEP web site at [www.stepslp.org](http://www.stepslp.org) and click on the GIVEMN button. Donating through GIVEMN saves time, postage and paper! You will receive an electronic acknowledgement for your donation, and at year end you will receive an electronic summary of your giving for tax purposes.

Donate to STEP on GIVEMN during March and enjoy the creative updates provided by the social work team and featuring yours truly, Julie Lapointe.

### Support local businesses and STEP at the same time!

During the month of March, Linsk flowers will donate a percentage of their March Bouquet sales to STEP, and McCoy's will donate a percentage of their beer and food sales to STEP. On Monday March 18th, Panera at Knollwood will be giving free coffee from 6 to 11:00 AM to customers who bring in a donation for STEP. And when you go, be sure to thank these businesses for helping STEP meet it's March fundraising goal!

## Food (continued from page 1)

Relief!

It helped me with taking away the feeling of despair, helplessness and depression and replaced them with the feelings of hope and love. I am starting to understand what it means to give.

It has been a blessing, it keeps our stomachs full and satisfied. Special thanks to all volunteers—what would we do without you?

I don't know how to tell you the magnitude in which you have helped me.

Instead of living on ramen noodles we get nutritious food to keep us healthy.

I have been unemployed for almost two years and recently my unemployment ended. I honestly don't know what I would have done without you guys. You have saved me. I got such wonderful items from you that I not only feel full but nourished, and I appreciated your help more than words can say.

Stronger, healthier, smarter children.

It means I have enough food to make a complete meal until I get paid.

It helps with my monthly food cost which I otherwise may not be able to afford.

We can eat and no one goes to bed hungry

Survival, after I pay my bills I only have \$20 a month for groceries.

I am able to afford health insurance through MN Care which is vital to me.

Full, happy, healthy girls. Knowing there is a place I can come for support when I need it.

I can live just on my social security each month.



### Are you interested in organizing a food drive?

If your family or organization would like help organizing a food drive for STEP, you can check out the STEP web site, [stepslp.org](http://stepslp.org), for more information or call Julie Jergens at 952-925-4899, ext. 14.



Did you know that STEP purchased 196,472 lbs. of food last year? But we received over 618,000 lbs. of food from donations! Of all the food donated to STEP, almost 20% came directly from individual donations. Thank you for your support!