

STEP UP

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STEP

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

SAVE THE DATE:

Empty Bowls (note the date change)
April 10, 2014 at Westwood Lutheran Church

A Very Special Cooking Event

Come to a cooking class and demonstration with renowned Chef Walter (Potenza). Sunday, March 2, 4:30—8:00 P.M. Proceeds to benefit STEP. For more details or to register visit <http://bit.ly/LG5wER> or contact Janice Feinberg at janiceef2@comcast.net.

PACK THE PEWS...

Be a part of this community-wide, congregation-led effort! Collect non-perishable food items for STEP the weekend of May 17th & 18th.



FIND STEP ONLINE!



FOLLOW STEP ON FACEBOOK

Get updates on needs, events and volunteer options!
www.facebook.com/STEPslp



DONATE ONLINE

Support STEP through a one-time or monthly donation at www.giveMN.org. Any amount helps!

Special Thanks

STEP is grateful to Phil Weber, owner of Park Tavern, and Jason Alvey, owner of Four Firkins, for their generous support of STEP and the St. Louis Park community.

Please support local businesses that support our community.

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.

STEP UP

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

Spring 2014

In This Issue:

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Program Update:

How we fill our shelves

Volunteer Spotlight:

Jason Alvey, Board Member and Food Shelf Volunteer

MN FoodShare March Campaign

Save the Date

Find STEP Online

Fighting Food Insecurity in St. Louis Park

Julie Lapointe, Program Manager

It has been 50 years since President Lyndon Johnson declared a "War on Poverty". It is only fitting that we think about this declaration during Minnesota FoodShare month—a time to call attention to food insecurity in Minnesota as well as a call to action to support local food shelves.

Over 4,000 people in St. Louis Park live in poverty. In 2013, STEP served 3,924 St. Louis Park residents who experienced food insecurity, meaning households could not meet all of their nutritional needs. Federal programs such as SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC—a program for children under the age of 5, pregnant

(Food Insecurity continued on page 3)

2014 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES & WASHINGTON D.C.

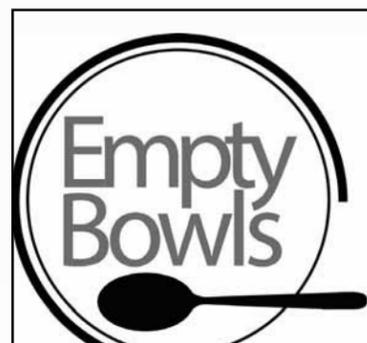
Persons in household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,670
2	15,730
3	19,790
4	23,850
5	27,910
6	31,970
7	36,030
8	40,090

*For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,060 for each additional person.

Empty Bowls Event

STEP is proud to announce a new partnership with Westwood Lutheran Church. The church will host the 14th annual Empty Bowls fundraiser on April 10th. Lunch will be served from 11:30-1:30 and dinner will be served from 4:30-6:30 P.M.

After a long and fruitful relationship with the St. Louis Park Recreation Center, a bigger venue was needed to support one of STEP's biggest fundraisers of the year. "Westwood Lutheran Church has been a great friend to STEP, and we are proud to further our partnership with an organization that has a like mission to serve the St. Louis Park community," said Jackie Olafson, STEP Executive Director. "This partnership allows us to live our mission to strengthen our com-



munity by responding to the basic emergency needs of individuals and families in St. Louis Park."

This event brings together art and hunger education in a community-wide effort to support our neighbors in need. A simple delicious meal of soup and bread is available for lunch or dinner. Local artists and community members make bowls that are distributed at the event and local musicians provide entertainment.

New this year will be activities that teach children about community service and helping those in need. Empty Bowls raises over \$26,000 annually and provides direct assistance to over 4,000 STEP clients.

Please note...

Date and Location Change for Empty Bowls

Thursday, April 10th
Westwood Lutheran Church, 9001 Cedar Lake Rd.

Empowering Lives & Restoring Hope.

Notes from STEP's Director

Jackie Olafson, Executive Director

Hello loyal supporters of STEP's mission

I have two messages to share with you.

Historically March has been the month of the FoodShare Campaign across the country. To encourage donors to support this important effort, Allan Feinstein sends out a challenge grant in the month of March to food shelves across the nation. He does this because, like each of you, he believes that we are placed on this earth to do what we can to help our neighbors in need.

The Feinstein Foundation gives one million dollars in match money to food shelves. The more we raise in March, the more we receive in grant match money.

This is an amazing challenge and this community is capable of meeting it with full force to make this year the best FoodShare month in STEP's 39 year history.

"Home grown" St. Louis Park resident hired for STEP Business Manager Position



Adrienne Rochat, our new Business Manager, grew up in St. Louis Park. Her family has a long association with the city. Adrienne's grandfather was a band director for the St. Louis Park school system. Her father and his siblings also

grew up in St. Louis Park.

Adrienne has a BS in Human Resource Management from Metropolitan State University, and she has experience working as an accountant for nonprofits. Adrienne is excited about being able to support STEP's mission and give back to her hometown.

We welcome Adrienne and salute her as the quarter master of our crew.

How do we do it? Filling the Shelves at STEP

Julie Jergens, Food Shelf Manager

The figures are in! Over 2,800 pounds of food leave STEP on an average day. That's well over 12,000 pounds of food a week going directly to help our neighbors in St. Louis Park. Filling our shelves involves many people and agencies. It might surprise many of you to learn that donations from individuals, churches, schools, businesses, and community food drives account for only 17% of the food we distribute here at STEP.

We also receive 15% from the government through the Farm Bill, 26% from weekly store rescue (Wal-Mart, Cub, Target, etc.), and 26% from foods donated directly to Second Harvest Heartland or Emergency Food Network (EFN). The rest (16%) we purchase primarily from those two food banks. We order food weekly and are able to really leverage our dollars by purchasing through the food banks. We buy healthy items at a fraction of grocery store

prices. Items like diced tomatoes for 24 cents a can, chicken noodle soup for 42 cents a can, and rice for 41 cents a pound can all be purchased at a discounted price.



With your \$1.00 donation, STEP can purchase \$5.00 worth of food. Now that's a great return on your investment!

March begins the Minnesota FoodShare Campaign, and your contribution to STEP of food or dollars will go a long way to keep our shelves filled all year long.

In Giving I Receive

Jason Alvey, STEP Board Member

I've been a board member at STEP St. Louis Park for about 5 months now, and I also volunteer at the food shelf helping with various aspects of the operation.

As a small business owner I don't have a lot of time to spare. In fact, I have very little time for anything other than running my business at all! My business, The Four Firkins, has been operating now for just over five years. I personally am still putting in 60 and 70 hour weeks. That is not going to let up anytime soon either with the additional workload of opening our second store.

About a year ago I found myself close to burnout, with no time for hobbies or family and I honestly had to ask myself, "why



am I doing this?" I love my job at the Firkins, and I am very proud of the business my team and I have created but at what personal cost? I needed something more.

I had been doing lots of charity donations, team sponsorships, etc. However, when Dick Parsons from STEP reached out to me and asked if I'd be interested in joining the board I realized this was what I'd been searching for.

Being on the board of a non profit organization like STEP was an amazing opportunity to give back to my immediate community in a very large way. Even though my workload is as crazy as ever, I'm actually excited and motivated to make time for STEP.

I have a renewed sense of focus and reason to get to work every day. The more successful my business becomes, the more I can give back to my community.

I would encourage any small business owner to consider volunteering at similar charitable organizations.

Food Insecurity (continued from page 1)

women, and nursing mothers), and free/reduced school nutrition programs are all part of the safety net to mitigate poverty.

Despite the success of these programs, food shelves have become an integral piece of the safety net as well. Fifty percent of people using STEP also participate in one or more federal nutrition programs noted above.

Why does it matter if our neighbors living in poverty have access to nutritious food? Poor dietary intake has negative consequences for individuals, families, communities, and our economy. Costly health problems including diabetes, heart disease, depression, obesity, and pregnancy complications are associated with food insecurity. Every day at STEP we see a disproportionate number of people who live with these chronic health problems. A 2011 report calculated the annual cost burden of hunger in the United States at a minimum of \$167.5 billion. This estimate includes the costs associated with charity, illness and psychosocial dysfunction, and diminished learning and economic productivity (Child Trends, 2013. Food Insecurity).

STEP serves 18% of children residing in St. Louis Park and 26% of children attending St. Louis Park schools. Poverty and food insecurity have particularly negative outcomes for children.

Research shows children growing up in poverty are more likely to be unhealthy, drop out of school, develop chronic health problems in adulthood, and earn lower wages than those who do not grow up poor (Child Trends, 2013. Food Insecurity).

Food insecurity is also related to lower cognitive and social development in infants and toddlers. These children are also more likely to experience illnesses, poor oral health, and hospitalizations than children living in food secure families (Food Research and Action Center, January 2013). This past fiscal year STEP helped alleviate the food insecurity of 600 infants and preschool age children by providing them with formula, baby food, and meals.

In addition to the physical health problems, children living with food insecurity are at increased risk for mental health and behavior problems. Poor academic performance, lower school attendance, and increased school suspensions can also be linked to inadequate food access (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2010). STEP was able to provide for the nutritional health of 1042 children ages 6-17 in our last fiscal year.

By being mindful of public policies and programs, like SNAP, that are critical to reducing hunger and improving health and by supporting food shelves like STEP who make a difference every day, you can have a meaningful impact on your community.