

May 29, 2014

TFC COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT AT "COMMUNITY SERVINGS"

By Susan Frodigh

Each year TFC closes the office for an afternoon to engage in a community service project. On May 29th we spent the afternoon in the kitchen of **Community Servings** in Jamaica Plain. Founded in 1989 by a coalition of AIDS activists, faith groups and community organizations, Community Servings is a not-for-profit food and nutrition program providing services throughout 215 square miles of eastern Massachusetts to individuals and families living with 35 different critical and chronic illnesses such as AIDS, diabetes, and kidney disease.

With the help of hundreds of volunteers, businesses, and corporate sponsors, and their dedicated staff and board members, Community Servings prepares and delivers 8,500 lunches and dinners each week to the homes of nearly 875 individuals and families who are homebound and too sick to cook for themselves--93% of whom live at or below the poverty level. "We give our clients, their dependent families, and caregivers appealing, nutritious meals, and send the message to those in greatest need that someone cares." The service includes a customized, nutritionally-packed lunch, dinner, and snack.



Awaiting Orientation (from L-R): Leann Sullivan, Connie Wyllie, Jodi Coochise, Mary Evans, Betty Harris, Susan Frodigh, Jane Taubner Barney, and Elisabeth Christino

"Our goal is to help our clients maintain their health and dignity and preserve the integrity of their families through free, culturally appropriate, home-delivered meals, nutrition education, and other community programs."

On the day of our service, after getting a stern orientation by Volunteer Management Coordinator Malissa Harmon about the importance of clean hands (aka the 20-second rule) and kitchen-related hygiene, we donned the requisite "unattractive hair nets" and set about our appointed tasks. Four of

us (Renée, Mary, Elisabeth, and I) were assigned to "broccoli" duty. Working in pairs, we trimmed 6 cases of broccoli heads into florets! As soon as we finished one case, another magically appeared. Scott, who presumably had decent "knife skills," helped slice lamb and then moved onto chopping green and red peppers. The rest of the staff (Michelle, Jane, Connie, Chuck, Leann, Jodi, Betty, and Kathy) assembled various dinner trays and packaged them for delivery.

We found the kitchen to be well organized and the staff happily engaged in their mission. They were very grateful that we were spending our afternoon alongside them. Following are a couple of the clients that Community Servings (and we) were assisting.

Sarah is a 38-year-old woman with Lupus, a chronic (lifelong) autoimmune disease that causes the immune system to attack the body's own tissue and organs. She currently needs a liver transplant and has severe fatigue. She has been hospitalized three times in the last three months. She lives in Winthrop with her husband, 6-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son.

Ricardo is blind due to diabetes and also has kidney failure. When Ricardo and his wife lost their housing, they had to relocate their children and themselves to a motel because the homeless shelters were full. The motel had no kitchenette to prepare food so the family was unable to prepare hot meals for themselves.

Community Servings is funded partially through grants and fundraisers such as the recent LifeSavor event which includes Boston's restaurant community and which raised \$555,000 for the meals and nutrition program.

All of us at TFC were gratified to have spent our afternoon in Community Servings' kitchen and felt we had chosen a "winner." In fact, Charity Navigator, America's premier independent charity evaluator, awarded Community Servings a coveted four-star rating for having an efficient and effective business model.

If you'd like to learn more about Community Servings, visit <http://www.servings.org/about/index.cfm>