

The Berkshire Food Project seeks to alleviate hunger, food insecurity, and social isolation by serving healthy, no cost meals and connecting people to other resources, all in a dignified and respectful manner.

Happy New Year!

As we bid adieu this unprecedented year of public health crisis, financial struggle, childcare and education issues and anxiety, there are certainly many people looking forward to a fresh, new year with good riddance to 2020. At the Berkshire Food Project we have certainly seen the impact of the pandemic - many months in 2020 we provided more than double our typical number of meals, and with far fewer volunteers and less food coming in via our Feeding America partners.

That said, it has been a remarkable year as well. The financial support we've received has made it possible for us to continue to meet a growing demand for meals even when local stores were selling their shelves bare with nothing left to donate, when the supply chain at the Food Bank of W MA was being stretched thin as well and when we found ourselves having to purchase more food than ever before, often at higher prices than ever. The social media sharing of our information helped us serve everyone, including those who had never been in need before and had no idea where to find help. When we gradually opened up a few volunteer shifts, the response was overwhelming, resulting in a waiting list for the opportunity to volunteer! We've received notes and phone calls of thanks and encouragement, often coming just at the moment we needed reassurance the most.

This support has sustained us. We've not had to turn anyone away. We were able to stay open through the early days of the pandemic when each day brought new information about a virus we continue to learn about even now. It's been a long, dark tunnel - but the support we've received has helped us keep our eye on the light at the end of the tunnel. That light shines on a community table where we will once again welcome everyone with respect, dignity, good food and good company. That is the heart and soul of the Berkshire Food Project - a warm and welcoming environment where our community breaks bread together, regardless of economic status, educational level or other differences - and one day we will return to that table.

We hope you will be there with us when we celebrate that day. That means staying safe now so we can all get there. Stay home when you can. When you can't stay home, wear your mask - and make sure it's covering your nose and mouth. Wash your hands a lot and use sanitizer when you can't. Stay at least six feet away from people you don't live with. Spend as little time as possible indoors with those people you don't live with. Keep informed - as we learn more about the virus, we learn more about the ways we can stay safe.

We look forward to a new year and the end of the pandemic - but at the Berkshire Food Project we'd be remiss if we didn't also say thank you for an incredible year too. Thank you to all who have cared and supported and done their part. Happy New Year!

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Our temporary pandemic meal distribution schedule is: Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM. Each day we distribute two meals. ALL are welcome - no questions asked.

Remembering Some of Those We Lost This Year



You may remember his smile as you worked with him in the kitchen, or perhaps as he served you a meal. For sure, if you visited the BFP during Eric's tenure as a staff person or volunteer, you remember his easy going and caring nature, his awesome sense of humor and the way he lit up whatever space he was in. And not just because he wore the brightest apron he could find each day! We loved working with him and have missed him the past couple of years. Sadly on November 12, 2020 Eric Engel lost his long battle with substance use disorder.

Earlier this year, **Ray Scheer** passed away. Ray and his wife Bev were integral in the creation of the BFP. The very foundation upon which the organization is built - the need for everyone to be treated with dignity and respect, the belief that everyone deserves to have enough to eat, the idea that all members of the community should have a place to break bread together - all of this came from the Scheers. Bev passed away in 2018 and Ray on October 16, 2020.

And earlier this year, a regular diner, **Anna**, passed away. Anna was always looking out for others in the dining room and making sure we knew when someone else needed something. She was a fixture in the southwest corner of the dining room. Her husband Mike continues to visit the BFP.

These are just a few of the people we've lost this year. Everyone has had so much loss this year. We send our thoughts out to everyone and hope for peace for all in the new year.

Our Heroes!

Initially we cancelled all volunteer shifts when the pandemic began... and gradually, as we understood how we could reduce risk for volunteers and staff, we added a few shifts, then a few more. People lined up to fill them. Volunteering does not offer the fun, shoulder to shoulder camaraderie it used to - each person is focused on their tasks, while staying safely distant. There's no question we can't do it without them - and we are so grateful for them all! Here's some volunteers in action along with our HUGE THANKS to them all!



While we continue to have a waiting list for volunteers, we do have shifts open up as volunteers' lives change. There's not always a perfect fit between when we need volunteers and when potential volunteers are available. If you are interested in being on the waiting list and being notified when a shift is open, e-mail Kim at kim@berkshirefoodproject.org.

THANK YOU!



We provide prepared meals to take home and heat up every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM. This schedule remains in effect for the foreseeable future - but **not** forever (we promise). There is **NO** criteria and no questions asked. We encourage families to send a single person to pick up to reduce the number of people standing in line. Masks and social distancing required in line and in the building.

Some of our Local Supporters

Click on logos for more information about them.



Thank you to everyone who continues to support the BFP during these uncertain times. Each week we see new faces - people who are often facing challenges and crisis due to the pandemic and its rippling effects. We are so grateful that we have enough for everyone thanks to all the wonderful people who support us. Thank you!

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