



Spring 2021

Table of Plenty in Chelmsford Newsletter

The Tuesday Morning Crew



**L-R: Annie Miles Armienti, Jane Rizzo, Chris Topjian, Rhonda Stanley, Patty O'Connell, Mary Moriarty, Carol Wolosewicz, Phyllis Dougherty, Aimee Krueger
Not Pictured: Tom Dougherty**

Prior to Covid-19, Table of Plenty served a sit down meal, typically hosting around 100 guests. We had also recently begun a pilot program with Harrington Elementary School to send grocery bags of food home on Fridays with families identified as food insecure. So when meal sites were shut down, we partnered with the Chelmsford Schools to continue to pack the grocery bags. This program grew to where two or three volunteer Board Members were packing 40 bags a week for families, Veterans, and others in town. Once we reopened in June 2020 as a Grab 'n Go Meal, we realized there was an urgent need for the weekly grocery bags, so we made the decision to continue collecting donations of non-perishable food items. This is where the Tuesday Crew made their entrance.

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Chelmsford Schools' Food Drives

Last summer, Byam Elementary School Association President, Laura Wilkinson, wanted to do something to harness the frustration and anxiety she felt around Covid. Like many of us, she and other families in town were feeling that there was little they could do to effect change. Laura was familiar with Table of Plenty and felt that initiating a food drive would be safe for families and beneficial to Table of Plenty. Donors could either drop non-perishables off outside at Laura's home, or they could donate via a PayPal account that she set up. Within only two weeks they collected two van loads of goods!

Knowing how much this donation helped contribute to Table of Plenty being able to pack grocery bags for our guests each week, Laura reached out to Hana Barker, the Secretary for the Council of Schools, which brings together all the PTOs in town. They set up a schedule so that beginning in December, each month a different school has run a food drive to benefit Table of Plenty. Laura said that's it has been great to work together and serve as an example to the kids that while *we are all separate schools, we are all one town.*

To promote the program, Laura also enlisted the help of her brother, Dan McDonald, to produce a short, informational video about Table of Plenty. You can view it by [clicking here](#).

THANK YOU CHELMSFORD FAMILIES!



Jackson and Ri Shaw from South Row Elementary School stand in front of the bounty they delivered from their school's Food Drive.

The Tuesday Morning Crew (continued from Page 1)

Our President, Mary Moriarty, reached out to longtime volunteer Phyllis Dougherty to ask if she could recruit a team to pack the bags.

Phyllis is no stranger to volunteering—in addition to Table of Plenty she's also a dedicated Power of Flowers volunteer, she collects clothes and food for The Wish Project, and you might even recognize her from her gig ushering at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium. Many in the group that she assembled, she knew from Power of Flowers, and still others are friends from town.

Over the course of the 2-3 hours they are there each Tuesday morning, they package up the bagels and muffins donated by KJs Caffe as well as the fruit and veggies from the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, receive and sort donations, pack eighty grocery bags full of food, and often get a head start on bagging the desserts for that night's meal.

While packing, they usually have music playing so they can dance and sing. Some days it's country and some days it's opera. It's a lot of work, but this group makes it look like a lot of fun, too.



Sponsoring a Meal



If you or your business are interested in sponsoring a meal, contact Table of Plenty at 978-710-8EAT(8328) or tableofplentyinchelmsford@gmail.com.

Thank You to Our Meal Sponsors and Donors

The following donors either sponsored a meal, or contributed an amount equal or greater than a meal sponsorship:

- ◆ Aldersgate United Methodist Church
- ◆ Anna Marie Briggs
- ◆ Business Network Interprise
- ◆ The Byam School Association
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- ◆ In Memory of Ellie Clancy, Volunteer with Table of Plenty: Ray Anstiss, Ira Beiler, Bob Clancy, Carolyn Clancy, Jack and Ann Clancy, Ted and Mary Clancy, Kathy and Chris Colecchi, Christine and Matthew Doyle, Judy and David Doyno, George and Carol Duncan, Kevin and Jylanne Dunne, Enterprise Bank, Mary Fiorentino, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Gardner, Mark and Sally Guglielmo, Paul Hardy, Harvard Business School Dean's Office, Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Hughes, Kati and Sal Lupoli, Sy and Janet Mahfuz, Robert Mascialino, Margaret McKenna and Michael Mangaudis, Chris McKeown, McKeown Family Children, Mary and Don Mulligan, Ted and Cheryl Nelson, Candy Race, Liz and John Ragnoni, Clare and Jerry Richer, Kristin Robinson Darcy, Mr. & Mrs. Marc Squires, Kent and Lisa Swauger, The Sworn Sisters Book Club, Samuel and Sharon Tamposi, Allen Townsend and Carol Reid, Mary Ellen and Frank Zappulla
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- ◆ In Honor of Sam Thomas
- ◆ Alfred and Kristen von Campe
- ◆ Daniel Ward
- ◆ James and Eileen Young
- ◆ In Memory of LCPL Andrew Zabierek
KIA Iraq



...and many more businesses and friends who wish to remain anonymous.

Cooking for 250



In early 2020, Table of Plenty typically cooked for 100 guests, and had an abundance of kitchen staff to prepare the meal. Now, our chefs are averaging 225—250 meals each week, and because of Covid -19 restrictions are only allowed four volunteers in the kitchen. We spoke with chef Sue MacDonald to see how the chefs have adapted in order to accommodate this shift.

The biggest change was getting creative in the meal selection. We had to come up with meals and menu items that can be stretched in order to get to those numbers. We changed from doing chicken legs or chicken pieces to more family style meals like chicken/broccoli/ziti and American Chop Suey, which we didn't do a lot of before. Because it's now a Grab 'n Go we spend time packaging up the meals, but in one sense it became easier because we're not doing dishes so we cut back on manpower that way.

We used to have a few people in the dishwashing room to do the dishes and pans, but now we either do the pans ourselves or have one person. There's not as much socializing in the kitchen as we're very busy. But we put the tunes up louder to get us moving! We miss seeing the guests in the dining room. We always enjoyed going out and chatting with them after we finished cooking to get feedback on the meal.

President's Message

There's so much to look forward to! Despite the April snow on the ground as I write this, spring truly is just around the corner. More and more adults are able to get vaccinated, Covid numbers and hospitalization rates seem to be dropping, and families are able to hug one another again! I even gave my 93 year old mom a kiss the other day—the first in over a year. I also look forward to Tuesdays each week. They are busy to be sure: some volunteers are picking up food from the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, some volunteers are grabbing bagels donated from KJs Caffe, and still others are packing grocery bags full of non-perishables. Our cooking team arrives midafternoon to begin preparing the meal, and the kitchen fills with great aromas. But the best part of Tuesdays is seeing the many guests who come to our Grab 'n Go meal. Many weeks we see the same faces, and each week there are new faces as well.



Mary Moriarty

It's hard to believe that it's been over a year since we sat together in the dining room, but the future looks bright, and I, for one, am looking forward to it.

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