



This is my last week with Healing Meals and I'm thankful that they have young people such as yourself, engaged and committed to providing such an important service to our community. Keep the tradition going! Best wishes for your senior year and promising future! 

Dear Healing Meals Team,

I loved volunteering here the past year. Everyone is so kind, and it is clear how much of a good impact we help make on the community. Thank you all so much for welcoming me, and for the very generous graduation gift. I wish you all the best!

Hello Healing meals team,
Thank you so much for the congratulations I think that the Healing meals community has done so much more for me than I have done for it. I've learned so much about nutrition and healthy eating while making a lot of kind friends in the process. I love going to the kitchen and making delicious meals for others. My experience here has been nothing less than wonderful and amazing. Thank you so much for having me and for all that you do. I hope to come back sometime! 

Team,

Thank you guys so much for this amazing opportunity, and environment you've created here. It means so much to be able to help out here, and be able to talk to everyone  Happy Holidays 



Written by Sandy Trionfni contributor
| Courtesy photos

Healing Meals Community Project has received several thank-you notes related to its work.

Healing meals community project is changing lives through nutrition, education and volunteerism

WHEN THERE IS A HEALTH CRISIS, YOUR FIRST PRIORITY MAY NOT BE THE PLANNING AND PREPARATION OF NUTRITIONALLY BALANCED MEALS FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY - EVERY WEEK. WHAT IF YOUR FOOD ALSO NEEDS TO BE GLUTEN AND DAIRY-FREE? ORGANIC? ANTI-INFLAMMATORY? ENTER CANTON COMMUNITY HEALTH FUND COMMUNITY PARTNER HEALING MEALS COMMUNITY PROJECT (HEALING MEALS), WHOSE MISSION IT IS TO DO JUST THAT. AND, THEY DO IT DELICIOUSLY.

In 2024, a CCHF Community Partner grant invested in not only the healthful food prep,

nutritional counseling and education that Healing Meals provides, but also in its vibrant volunteer program open to adults, but uniquely focused on youth as well.

CCHF Board member Sandy Trionfni, recently sat down with Susan Hoffman, Community Engagement Manager at Healing Meals, to discuss how CCHF's investment in their work contributes to the Health, Safety and Well-Being of our community.

The Mission of Healing Meals Community Project is to provide healthy, organic meals to people in a health crisis, while fostering compassion and empowering volunteers in the communities they serve.

Since its establishment in 2016, Healing Meals has served approximately 180,000 meals to individuals experiencing a health crisis and their families. Qualified participants receive five meals each week, consisting of Healing Meals signature nourishing broth, soup, salad and two meals of either meat, fish or vegetarian options. There is also a homemade dessert.

Food as Healing

Seasonal meals are created by a talented head chef and a volunteer kitchen crew. Food is sourced locally, whenever possible, and from a small garden on the grounds of Healing Meals. Meals are served on compostable, heat-sealed trays and designed for up to four people. The

delivery area for Healing Meals is 45 minutes from their kitchen in Weatogue, but meals are available to anyone who qualifies in Connecticut, if they can arrange for delivery.

Part of the Healing Meals experience is that volunteers also write personal cards to each recipient. The thank you note below, from a Canton client, exemplifies how life changing the Healing Meals impact can be:

I just received our first delivery, and I am seriously overwhelmed with gratitude! The handwritten cards, the personalized notes, the typed up menus, the careful packaging, and last but not least the amazing quality of the ingredients...it's all so wonderful and beautiful!!!

A big thank you to you and all of your volunteers! Thank you to ... for the beautifully written card and for cooking the fish stew and the chicken! A big thank you to ... also, who braved the cold with a smile when delivering our meals! Like I said, I feel blessed by your generosity!

"The overwhelming impact of our unique programming is that Healing Meals can and does improve lives permanently, for both the recipients of the meals and those preparing and distributing them," says Hoffman.

Nutritional counseling and education further reinforces the Healing Meals experience. One example of this is the Healing Meals pre-natal program, available to expectant mothers experiencing a health crisis. Moms-to-be and their families are supported, throughout their pregnancy, with an emphasis on incorporating healthy nutrition into the family's short- and long-term lifestyle.

Volunteer Experience

Since opening in 2016, 710 youth have been through their



ABOVE. L TO R Sandy Trionfini, CCHF Board Member, Cheryl V., Healing Meals Community Project volunteer, Susan Hoffman, Healing Meals Community Project's Community Engagement Manager

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YOUR HIGH SCHOOL
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"Healing Meals taught me a lot about healthy eating and sustainable food growing. I also learned about collaboration, leadership and the importance of a volunteer community."

- Youth Volunteer

volunteer program. Healing Meals has accumulated a staggering 72,000 hours of volunteer hours overall, with adults tallying 46,000 hours and teens 25,000. In 2024, 196 teens and 270 adults were Healing Meals volunteers.

Because Healing Meals employs very few people, their reliance on volunteers is designed to offer personal outcomes that can be life changing, in unexpected ways. Their youth program, in particular, was specifically developed to enhance the volunteer experience for high school students. For example, each teen signs up week by week, according to his, her or their schedule. This is a basic, but key component to building confidence as parents, guardians or other adults are not permitted to schedule the student; it is done through personal email initiated by the teen themselves. Thus, teens learn personal advocacy, job skills and how to deal with adults.

Another important component of this experi-

ence is the individualization of each teen. "You know and use our name when we come in the building," shared one student volunteer.

There are also a number of rewards for Healing Meals youth volunteers. For example, after 50 hours of service, teens are awarded a 'Blue Apron' with their name on it. They are also promoted into membership of the Healing Meals 'Youth Development Committee.' These Committee members self-direct their activities while at the Healing Meals site.

After 100 hours of volunteering, teens earn a 'Chef Coat.' Volunteering at this level is a great opportunity to develop additional leadership and critical thinking skills, while working with multi-generational crews.

**Results:
Youth Program Impact Report**

Recently, Healing Meals created a 'Youth Program Impact Report' to survey and measure the outcomes of their teen volunteer programming.

Of particular interest were the reasons why teen volunteers continued to participate:

- The opportunity and ability to help people.
- Liking to cook and continuing to learn how to cook using the Healing Meals nutrition-forward model.
- Learning about food and nutrition.
- Learning how to grow food.

Other significant findings included:

- Youth volunteers rated their overall experience as a '94' on a scale of 100.
- Over 85% of teens reported gaining confidence on working with people in groups, as well as learning about leadership.
- 80% of teens indicated they learned social skills like communication, organization and time management.
- 75% of respondents indicated they learned not just how to cook, but also different cooking skills.
- 39% indicated they increased their personal consumption of fruits; 49% ate more vegetables; and 30% incorporated more whole grains and beans into their own diets.

"The impact of Healing Meals programming cannot be overstated in its positive effect on both Canton residents and those who choose to volunteer," says Trionfini. "CCHF is proud to have a Community Partnership with this unique and amazing organization which is making a difference in people's lives every day."

Healing Meals Community Project... a powerful Community Voice BY, FOR, ABOUT CANTON. VT

For more information on Healing Meals Community Project please contact: Susan@healingmealsproject.org
Join Canton Community Health Fund, Inc. in supporting the lifesaving work of all our Community Partners with your donation through PayPal at <https://bit.ly/30i-K6jN>, or P. O. Box 75, Collinsville, CT 06022. And, please Follow our Facebook page. We Thank You!



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