

Nourishing with Love & Kindness:



HEALING MEALS
COMMUNITY PROJECT

ARTICLE BY LUCINDA JAMISON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEALING MEALS COMMUNITY PROJECT



The Healing Meals Community Project is a small but mighty organization that provides nourishing, organic meals to people experiencing serious health crises. But it's also so much more.

Established in 2016, the project is a multi-level interconnected platform that works to build and strengthen communities by "empowering young people, promoting community service, caring for those in need, and restoring healthy and organic fresh foods to their place as the foundation of health for people and the planet," says Sarah Leathers, one of the group's founding members.

During a major health struggle of her own, Sarah faced staggering challenges putting together healthy meals for her family and herself. Meanwhile, Sarah's sister, Cathryn Couch, had begun the Ceres Community Project in Sonoma County, California to prepare home-delivered meals for people too sick to shop or cook.

As Sarah followed her sister's project development she knew she was going to start this in Connecticut someday. "It was my dream. You just have to talk to a client or a young person in our group, and you'll understand why. Every single day, I am so lucky

to do this work...I learned through my own health challenge that food really matters and having people caring about me mattered, and that's what I'm able to do now."

The mission of Healing Meals is to introduce youth to community service by bringing in teen volunteers to assist with the meal preparation process. Food and service are at the heart of the Project. Healthy, locally grown food is sourced from area farms, including one small family farm that produces only for Healing Meals. Every client receives six meals once a week along with a handwritten note of encouragement and caring crafted by the teens. That writing process combined with the confidence gained by working in the kitchen alongside peer and adult volunteers impacts them in many positive ways.

"The job of our team and the core of our work is that everyone who walks through our doors to help feels cared for, feels nourished, feels the joy because we can't do this without our volunteers. If they don't feel excited to come, they aren't going to keep coming."

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The community service has continued to evolve and now serves sometimes more than 600 meals per week to clients in more than 75 local towns. To date, more than 100,000 meals have been prepared for more than 1,500 clients, 43,000 volunteer hours have been logged, and 490 youth have been a part of the program.

"The need is great, and we always need support," Sarah said. "That can come in a lot of different ways, but for us to continue to grow and serve the Connecticut communities, we need people's support especially in getting the word out. If this program resonates with you, come see us and learn more about what we do. Let's find a way for you to get involved. We have a client waiting list, and we need to serve more people. We need to find more ways to do that."

WAYS TO HELP:

- Buy a Nourishing Community Cookbook (visit healingmealsproject.org/support/purchase-cookbook)
- Join as a volunteer (information sessions are offered monthly)
- Join the annual walk/run marathon each fall
- Make a donation or become a sustaining member
- Tell a friend about Healing Meals Community Project and help spread the word about their work!

The Healing Meals Community Project
healingmealsproject.org
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