



IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Moravian Open Door launches breakfast program



Cook Natasha Merius serves breakfast in the new kitchen at MOD

Less than a year ago, Moravian Open Door (MOD), the transitional housing facility in Manhattan that has been serving homeless adult men and women for 25 years, made plans to extend its services to residents by emphasizing health and wellness through education and a breakfast program. Those plans came to fruition as the facility recently completed a new kitchen.

Information and a meal

MOD wanted to provide not only information about nutrition, health and wellness to its residents, but a healthy breakfast as well. This was impossible unless the 25-year old kitchen was fully renovated. Appliances were in disrepair or missing, and many features were not up to current New York City code.

After obtaining preliminary bids, it was determined that at least \$120,000 would be needed to renovate the kitchen and establish the breakfast program. In late June, 2011,

MOD began its “Feed His Sheep” special gifts campaign to raise these funds within two years. Board members and members of the Public Relations and Development Committee contacted individuals and wrote grant proposals.

The response was overwhelmingly positive — 91 individuals made pledges totaling \$84,000, the UBC Trustees Church Extension Fund granted \$50,000 in matching funds, the Society for Promoting the Gospel granted \$5,000, a Larger Life Foundation discretionary grant provided \$5,000, the Northeast Pennsylvania Moravian Mission Society granted \$1,500, and gifts from three church groups provided \$3,000 (Dover First Moravian Women, Central Moravian Busy Workers, and Riverside First Moravian Church). A special loan from the Sixth Century Fund of the Eastern District allowed the kitchen renovation to begin in fall 2011.

This new kitchen is part of a program to provide a healthy breakfast to MOD residents



Renovating for food service

The firm Elite FoodService Equipment Company of Farmingdale, NY carried out the renovation. Everything was replaced and brought up to code: flooring, walls, ceiling, ventilation, fire suppression system, drainage system, and all new commercial appliances. New storage cabinets were installed in the common room, and new tables and chairs, china, flatware, and other serving and cooking necessities were purchased.

MOD was fortunate to have the advice and help of David Evans, former senior cook and trainer at the Stein Senior Center in Manhattan to plan the menus, identify food vendors and organize the breakfast program. Residents had filled out questionnaires about special dietary needs, and these needs were recognized in the menus. One of David's former student trainees, Natasha Merius, was hired as breakfast cook, and David agreed to work with her during the first two weeks of establishing the program.

On April 2, 2012, the Common Room was festive with flowers on tables as the first breakfast was served. There were enthusiastic reviews by the residents. Breakfast is served every day but Sunday, during a one and a half hour period that allows all who work to get a good meal before leaving for the day.

In preparing for the breakfast program, staff member Michael Ralling completed a course given by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, receiving a Qualifying Certificate in Food Protection. He will provide training for the residents in food handling and how to use the new appliances so that they will be able to make meals for



A MOD resident enjoys breakfast served from the new MOD kitchen

themselves. The kitchen also will be available for visiting groups to use in order to serve special meals for the residents.

With this new kitchen, MOD is better prepared to provide a safe and clean place to live. Its staff provides services that help rebuild lives with the goal of finding affordable housing for independent living. A life skills program was begun three years ago, with a Life Skills Center equipped with four computers, mentoring in computer skills, and classes in word processing. There have been workshops in financial literacy (provided by Wells Fargo Bank) and health fairs for education and baseline testing (the first provided by the nearby Karpas Health Information Center and later by volunteer nurses from John Hus Moravian Church).

Generosity makes it happen

This project would not have been possible without the generous “extra mile” gifts received from individuals and others. All donations to the Feed His Sheep campaign are in a restricted fund and used solely to support the breakfast program. Moravian Open Door receives no government funding, and its op-

Doris Schattschneider is president of the Moravian Open Door board of directors.

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erating budget is funded entirely by donations from individuals, churches, church organizations, and fees paid by its residents for room and supportive services.

In this, its 25th year of service, Moravian Open Door looks forward to celebrating the difference it has made in the lives of so many formerly homeless individuals, and continuing its mission with the strong support of the Moravian Church. ■