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evasvillage.org

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Goya Returns to Eva's for "Goya Day"

As part of the "Goya Gives" program, Goya Foods returned to Eva's Village on December 21, 2022 to give our Community Kitchen guests a special meal. Chef Peter designed the lunch of Chicken Veracruz with Chorizo Stuffing and Mexican Corn based on Goya products that were donated. The organization also donated over 300 bags filled with Goya snacks, drinks and treats.

The Paterson Post 1 Explorers of the Northern New Jersey Council, Boy Scouts of America, served the meals to our Community Kitchen guests. The guests thoroughly enjoyed the meal and the service!



evasvillage.org     

Voices of the Village

Where Hope Begins

FEBRUARY 2023

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The "Hungry" May Not Be Who You Think They Are

Many of the guests who come to Eva's Village Community Kitchen don't fit the stereotype many of us envision as "the hungry" or "the needy." The guests we feed each day come from all walks of life – all races, ethnicities, and religions; educated and uneducated; families with young children to older adults; clean shaven wearing clean clothing to individuals clearly living on the streets. For all guests, we help bridge the gap between eating and not eating. For some, it's a lifeline.

"We wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for Eva's. I wouldn't know where to get our meals. We're so grateful to Eva's and grateful to be alive."

— Mark & Catherine (husband & wife), Community Kitchen regulars

With inflation and grocery costs rising, many of Paterson's working poor struggle with tough decisions such as: "Do I buy groceries or buy my medication?" "Do I buy groceries or pay my rent?" The free, healthy, nutritious meals we serve to our neighbors each weekday help to provide some relief from their increasing, daily expenses.

OVER 300,000 MEALS SERVED IN 2022!

In 1982 our founder, Msgr. Puma, and a team of dedicated volunteers, fed thirty hungry neighbors on folding tables in the basement of a convent. Today Eva's big, bright, welcoming Community Kitchen serves almost 1,000 healthy, nutritious meals each weekday to our Paterson neighbors and the residents in our homeless shelters and halfway houses. In addition, the Community Kitchen provides additional meals to our shelters and halfway houses on the weekends.

Meals Served with a Side of Compassion

"No matter who walks through the door, they are welcome to sit down and enjoy a hot meal," explained Howard Haughton, Eva's Village CEO. "We abide by Msgr. Puma's guiding principle to treat all those who come to us seeking help with dignity and respect. And we do."

If you ask Angela Vance, Volunteer Coordinator at Eva's Village, she will say that Eva's has the finest volunteers anywhere. "Our volunteers know that a warm smile or a friendly hello may be the only positive interaction a guest may have that day," explained Ms. Vance.

Whether you are a "regular" known by the staff and volunteers or a first-timer, you will receive the same warm, friendly experience. Ms. Vance continues, "You are required to wear long pants, that's an OSHA requirement. A smile is also required when serving a meal and that's my requirement. We truly want people to feel taken care of and our volunteers and staff deliver on that every day. I truly believe our volunteers are the best."



7-year volunteer, Lillian D'Agostaro

Eva's is fortunate to have a dedicated, close-knit team of volunteers who enjoy serving in the Community Kitchen. "I have been serving in this Community Kitchen for over 7 years," said Lillian D'Agostaro. "I love it. Not only am I helping those in need, but I've created some wonderful friendships with the other volunteers that will last a lifetime."

Donate today to help provide healthy, nutritious meals to our neighbors in need.

\$50 provides 10 meals
\$100 provides 20 meals

\$250 provides 50 meals
\$500 provides 100 meals



Click, scan or mail to make a donation.

www.EvasVillage.org/Food
393 Main Street
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From The CEO

While Eva's Village has grown to be one of the largest nonprofit social services and behavioral health organizations in New Jersey, our start as a simple soup kitchen still influences how we serve today. Our Community Kitchen is the "anchor" of Eva's Village and it's where many of our clients are first introduced to our many programs and services.

As you will read in this newsletter, our Community Kitchen serves a wide variety of guests, but each and every one of them is treated with dignity and respect – just as our founder intended.

Our Community Kitchen plays many roles. First and foremost, we provide healthy, nutritious meals to those who are hungry. It provides warm, friendly connections for some who may not receive them elsewhere. The Kitchen also acts as a respite from inclement weather.

In addition, it serves as a connection to our social services and behavioral health programs including our emergency shelters; our community-based, peer-led Recovery Community Center; our three halfway houses; our outpatient substance use disorder programs; our outpatient mental health programs; and more. By connecting individuals with these programs, we help those struggling with hunger, homelessness, substance use disorders and mental health issues find the support, guidance and resources they need to live healthy, stable, independent lives.


Howard Haughton



**DONATE
TODAY!**

Join us at our upcoming events:

Casino Night
March 10, 2023

**Behind the Seams
Fashion Show**
May 17, 2023

**Annual Golf
Tournament**
June 12, 2023



Purchase event tickets at:
evasvillage.org/events

Chef Peter, 33 Years of Giving Back

Early Days

Chef Peter Ceru didn't think he would end up as the Head Chef of a nonprofit when he graduated at the top of his class at culinary school. He imagined working at a posh restaurant in New York City serving high-end guests. Instead, a conversation with Eva's founder, Msgr. Puma, changed the course of Peter's career, and he has been with Eva's Village for 33 years.

"I was introduced to Msgr. Puma and he asked if I could give him an evaluation of their soup kitchen, which was handled by volunteers. At that time it was in the basement of a convent and it was not in good shape," explained Peter Ceru. "Their refrigerators were filled with left-over donated wedding cakes and the food was not being stored properly."

"I figured I'd work at Eva's for a year or two, give back to the community and help them straighten things out," explained Ceru. "Thirty-three years later, I'm still here."

The Kitchen Then and Now

For many years, the kitchen received food from the state and the staff had to make do with what was delivered. "I remember receiving a thirty-pound block of cheese and cutting chunks off of it. We made a lot of macaroni and cheese then," Ceru said with a chuckle.

Today, Eva's Village serves nearly 1,000 meals each weekday in the big, bright Community Kitchen. Chef Peter is focused on providing healthier meals with less salt and less sugar. One thing that hasn't really changed, the coffee. "It has always been served light and sweet – and that's never going to change."

The Community Kitchen also serves meals to the residents in Eva's Emergency Overnight Shelters and Halfway Houses. "We have to be aware of dietary restrictions for our residents and that's more than just food allergies. We have to be considerate of religious beliefs, as well, so because of that, we don't serve much pork in our residential facilities," said Chef Peter.



Chef Peter Ceru

No Looking Back

After a recent health concern, Peter reevaluated many things in his life, including his career. "When I first took the job my friends and family thought I was crazy. They said I would miss out on other opportunities. But I have always felt it's something I needed to do. I'm not going anywhere."

When asked what he likes best about this job, Peter says it's the overall feeling of satisfaction that he has helped someone else. "Through the food I cook, I may have provided the meal that will help someone get through one more day of life. I'd like to think I've helped."

**CHILDREN
NOW WELCOME FOR
BREAKFAST & LUNCH**
(when accompanied
by an adult)



It's More Than Just a Meal

The Community Kitchen is often the entry point for clients who receive other social services or behavioral health support from Eva's Village. The phrase, "it all started with a meal" has been true for many of Eva's clients and residents.

By engaging with our Community Kitchen guests, our staff and volunteers find out why our guests are struggling. Is the individual homeless or suffering from mental illness? Is there a substance use disorder?

Depending on the challenges the guest is facing, the kitchen staff or volunteer can direct them to the appropriate program or services Eva's offers.

Our founder, Msgr. Puma said, "You can't help someone if they are hungry." Meaning, they are not going to hear what you are saying if they are starving. You can't break through if all they can think about is where to find their next meal. In order to truly help someone, you need to feed them.



Service with a smile!

Our Community Kitchen, and the warm, friendly reception our guests receive from our staff and volunteers, works to break down the barriers to receiving assistance. A meal, a conversation, and a genuine offer to help can be a turning point for many.

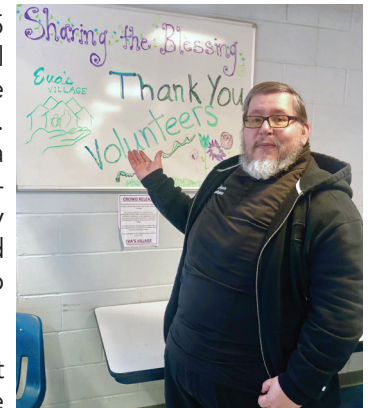
The Community Kitchen also serves as a hub of services. In January the Community Kitchen hosted Paterson's Project Homeless Connect event where different agencies gathered to engage with individuals seeking assistance with emergency housing and more.

With funding from a grant received from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the Community Kitchen is being used to connect individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with specific community services focused on providing a path to stable housing.

Tough Guy Exterior, Warm Heart

People who visit Eva's and observe our breakfast or lunch services often have the same reaction, "It's so orderly!" Pedro Negron, Eva's Front of the House Manager, oversees the meal service and is particularly focused on keeping things orderly, efficient and safe.

"I have been doing this for 5 years and I know how to deal with the guests who come in," explained Mr. Negron. "Some folks may come in a little hot headed or disruptive, but I make sure they understand the rules and procedures so there is no trouble."



Pedro Negron

Pedro may look tough, but he has a warm heart. "I have ten to twenty people a day asking me for help with housing, paperwork, or jobs. I send them to our Recovery Community Center, Father English or the Catholic Family Center. Recently I helped a couple who were regulars find housing in Pennsylvania. I'll miss having them around, but I'm happy they are settled."

Paul Fierro, Gleaning Guru

Paul Fierro, Purchasing Agent at Eva's, knows a thing or two about excess food. "I've been in food service my whole life, including working with hotels and restaurants and even having my own food truck," says Fierro. Through his career, Fierro has established relationships with just about everybody in food service, and now it's paying off.

"Approximately 15 percent of our food is donated or gleaned," explained Fierro, "which has a big impact on our overall food costs." [Gleaning is the act of collecting excess food.] Fierro says it's not uncommon for a local food provider to call him up and offer a large donation. "I often need to act quickly, so I'm always ready to jump in the van and do a pickup."

Fierro works closely with Chef Peter to set the menus and often builds the menus around food that has been donated or gleaned. "We were very fortunate to have a large donation from Costco in Wayne of skirt steak before the holidays," explained Fierro. "We kept it in our freezer and then on Christmas Day we served steak to the emergency shelters and halfway houses. It was because of that donation we were able to provide such a special meal."



Purchasing Agent, Paul Fierro