

# Devoted To Serving

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RFMA Gives improves ergonomics and expands food storage for Christian Service Center's The Daily Bread

In downtown Orlando, by 11 a.m., a line of hungry people forms, waiting for The Daily Bread to open its doors at noon. There, six days a week, they receive a free nourishing, hot meal—no questions asked. Anyone who is hungry is welcome.

Christian Service Center opened The Daily Bread in 1975 with one goal: Feed the hungry.

From 1975 to 1987, The Daily Bread distributed restaurant vouchers to its clients. In 1987, the facility built a dining room. Thousands of meals were prepared offsite and delivered to the facility. In 1997, thanks to generous donations, the facility built a commercial-grade kitchen to prep and cook meals onsite.

Today, The Daily Bread has two central Florida locations—one in downtown Orlando and one in West Orange County. The two facilities serve an average of 550 meals per day. In 2014, The Daily Bread served its four millionth meal to the central Florida community.

The food is received through multiple sources. Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida is a private, nonprofit organization that collects, stores and distributes donated food. Second Helpings is a prepared-food rescue program that collects and delivers donations from local restaurants, hotels and resorts. The organization also picks up donated food from large retailers partners, such as Whole Foods, Walmart and Target

With multiple deliveries during the week and limited cold storage, the Orlando staff had only a day or two in advance to prepare 250 to 300 meals a day.

A meal typically includes a hot sandwich, a salad, a side, a cup of soup, fresh fruit, yogurt and dessert. It is a hearty meal by design because it may be the only meal someone eats in a day.

In addition to The Daily Bread, Christian Service Center also provides emergency assistance for food, rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, clothing, prescription medicines and transportation. The Love Pantry program provides students with emergency food supplies. Participating schools keep a cabinet stocked with common food and hygiene items. Volunteers restock the cabinet every week. Students can take home a care package that also includes community resource information. These services help individuals and families make ends meet and help them get back on their feet.

"I love what we do," said Robert Stuart, Executive Director of Christian Service Center. "It's a chance for us to express our faith in a way that is consistent to what we believe: People are hungry; let's go feed them."

## A BIG NEED

The Daily Bread, a 42-year-old building with an aging 20-year-old kitchen, needed major repairs.

Relying mostly on private donations, there wasn't enough money to fix items that weren't emergencies or critical to food preparation and health and safety issues.

"We had broken doors with no handles. They had to be opened by pulling on a latch. The front doors were wedged shut. They had to be hip checked to be opened and closed," said Bob Klinefelter, Director of Finance and Facilities at Christian Service Center. "The ceiling tiles were broken, stained and falling in the kitchen. The sink was held level by two bricks. The 50-gallon soup kettle, which was extremely heavy and hot, had to be lifted and moved 10 feet to the serve line. It was set on a milk crate so volunteers could ladle the soup. It was a dangerous job. Without enough money, we just had to make it work. The place was dingy. I never had a cheery feeling when I went over there."

When Stuart applied for the RFMA Gives project, he thought if they were chosen as this year's recipient, they may be gifted with a new stove and some ovens, which he would have been gracious and thankful to receive. But during the site visit with Co-Project Managers Ron Wilhite, CRFP, Mark Gomolla, CRFP, and Kelly Otto, CRFP, along with Jeff Dover, CRFP, Facilities Resource Manager at RFMA, Stuart was told to dream big.

"What surprised me was the extent of what RFMA wanted to do," he said. "After they saw the final list, they said, 'We could do this.'"

The wish list included:

- A new roof and ceiling
- New HVAC systems
- Parking lot repairs
- A new kitchen layout
- New commercial kitchen equipment
- Creating windows in the dining area
- Expanded food storage
- Constructing a loading zone
- Restroom remodel
- Create a shaded patio
- Plumbing

- Electrical, including installing LED lights
- Build new office space
- New paint
- Landscaping
- Pest control

Each year, Christian Service Center welcomes the help of up to 3,000 volunteers who perform basic tasks, such as mowing the lawn, painting and serving meals at The Daily Bread. Between 20 to 25 volunteers are on hand each day between both locations.

The volunteers are integral to operations, so the project managers had to design a space that improves ergonomics and efficiencies with the lay helpers in mind.

"RFMA Gives actually cares and wants to give back to communities," Gomolla said. "It may seem like its too good to be true, but it's not. We have a lot people who open their hearts and checkbooks, and it's something amazing to be a part of."

"While we're all blessed and fortunate to have jobs and earn a paycheck, others don't have the same opportunities," Wilhite said. "It could be a series of little things that someone can't overcome, leading to homelessness or food insecurity."

When the scope of work was finalized and the donation list was disseminated to the RFMA community, the membership responded in true RFMA fashion—swiftly and generously.

"Once I put the needs out there, I had to block off the rest of my day because the calls started flooding in," Dover said. "Each year, the response is overwhelming and humbling."

## THE KICKOFF

The Volunteer Day, held in September 2016, officially kicked off the labor portion of the project.

More than 150 RFMA members flew into Orlando from across the country. In anticipation, a Christian Service Center staff member purchased a map of the United States and push pins so the volunteers could show where they were from.

"It's amazing how people just don't donate from San Diego or Seattle," Klinefelter said. "They flew in on their own dime, on their own time, to do this work. They didn't come to tour Orlando. They came in, worked and went home."

Over the weekend, the volunteers:

- Painted the interior of the Daily Bread building
- Painted the exterior of three buildings on the property

- Landscaped several areas around the property, including planting bushes, laying sod, trimming trees and clearing areas
- Cleaned and reorganized the clothes pantry and other offices
- Reorganized several rooms in the Administration building
- Performed general cleaning of the facilities
- Completed a restroom remodel

"My first day on the job was on Volunteer Day," said Bryan Hampton, Director of Communications at Christian Service Center. "I was blown away by the number of people who showed up and how warm and excited everyone was about the project."

The volunteers who descended upon Christian Service Center exemplified RFMA's deep commitment to the project. They personify the heart that make up the RFMA membership.

"A group from Chipotle chose to remodel the volunteer bathroom," Stuart said. "They started on Friday, gutted it, and a volunteer stayed an extra day until Tuesday to finish it I asked him, 'Why would you do this?' He said, 'You have no idea how much fun this is for me.'"

"My favorite part of RFMA Gives is seeing the surprised faces when the recipient organization's staff see how many people show up for the Volunteer Day," said Jack Kortekamp, Corporate Sales Manager at Roto-Rooter.

## DREAM BUILDERS

The remainder of the work started in February 2017, with some starts and stops. The projects were completed without affecting The Daily Bread's ability to serve its clients. The crews worked while the facility was closed, from 2:30 p.m. to 7 a.m.

"It's no different from our restaurant clients," Wilhite said. "It's night work; it's what we do."

"RFMA is a joy because they are true professionals working on our building. I'm not used to dealing with such professionals over my 17 years here," Klinefelter said.

Over the nearly year-long project, almost all the wish-list items were checked off.

The Daily Bread received a new, custom-fit roof. The materials were provided by Duro-Last and installed by Royalty Roofing.

The Royalty Roofing team traveled to Orlando to measure and inspect the existing roof. The materials were ordered and shipped to the site. The team spent a few days installing the new roof and returned after three new HVAC units were installed on the roof to add flashing to ensure it is watertight.

"We're committed to RFMA, so we go wherever they need us," said Dale Sventeck, Vice President of Royalty Roofing.

The kitchen received cooking equipment from a closed Ruby Tuesday test kitchen. The facility's 30-year-old six-burner oven was replaced with two four-burner stoves and a Blodgett double oven. Extra cold storage was created behind the kitchen. The facility already had a small walk-in cooler, and it received a new walk-in cooler/freezer. A loading zone with a garage door was built to facilitate food deliveries.

The new layout also improves the safety and functionality of the kitchen. The kitchen staff no longer has to move the giant soup kettle. The cook line was replumbed to be closer to the serving line. Large tilt skillets allow the staff to make and serve soup easily and safely.

"We'll have space for two soup kettles so we can make more soup," Hampton said. "The new freezer space will allow us to accept more meat and larger donated items. Now that we can increase the volume of food donations, we can mix up the menu and cook things we weren't able to serve before because we didn't have the equipment or storage space."

The new kitchen also aids in heating and serving hotter meals.

"We had limited ovens to warm meals," Klinefelter said. "We would warm 150 meals at a time. The first batch would start getting cold while we warmed the second batch."

Outside, the parking lot had severe drainage issues, and the concrete was in need of repair. Mad Jack's repaired the entire lot, installed a new trench drain grate and paved one side of the building. The work took approximately a week.

Though Charles Clevidence, President of Mad Jack's, has been a RFMA member since 2010, this was his first RFMA Gives project. He got involved because he wanted to promote his company, but the experience quickly changed his motivation.

"We do thousands of projects a year, and we rarely get compliments for a job well done," he said. "In this business, no news is good news. But when we got to Orlando, the people at Christian Service Center told us every day how much they appreciated us being there. They made me start to feel differently about the project. Then, they showed me their operations, and my whole attitude changed. These people feed 350 hungry people—some of them are moms and kids—in 45 minutes. It blew me away. These are genuinely good people, and we're doing something good for them. To be a part of this experience, to know that something we did will be there for years to come has touched me so much. Now, I want to stay involved with these types of projects. If I don't get ROI from this, it was still absolutely worth it, and I'd do it again because of the change that happened within me."

"The rewards go far beyond ROI in terms of dollars," Wilhite said. "If you get involved, I promise you, the rewards are so much greater than ROI. If you go into this with ROI in mind, you're missing the magic of RFMA Gives. It allows you to do a selfless act to help another human being. If you have been involved, thank you. If you haven't, get involved and come find out what you've been missing."

"Anyone who steps on our property leaves changed because they see what we do and how we do it," Stuart added.

Many others were deeply moved by Christian Service Center's mission.

"It's so neat to see the level of passion, giving and commitment from everyone at Christian Service Center," Wilhite said. "It just doesn't come from receiving a paycheck; it comes from knowing you're helping your fellow man. They inspire me. This project is important to me because I see how important it is to them. I see what they're doing, and I see why they're doing what they're doing. I see their passion, and it's contagious."

"I was there at lunchtime and saw the people coming in, and it hit me hard," Gomolla said. "Listening to what Christian Service Center does is one thing; when you see and speak with the clients being served, it's a totally different experience. I'm a more compassionate person after this experience."

Additionally, a shaded patio area was constructed to add extra seats; the old linoleum kitchen floor was replaced with epoxy; the ceiling tiles were replaced; the lighting was upgraded to LED; offices for case management, health screenings and legal services were built; the entire facility was painted; and three floor-to-ceiling windows were created in the dining room, bathing the space with natural light.

"Every dollar we save for Christian Service Center is another dollar they can use to help the community," Dover said.

With the work nearly complete, Hampton reflects on the tremendous project management skills needed to orchestrate the scope of work.

"What really impressed me was the number of vendors who donated their time and services and coordinating all those cooks in the kitchen," he said. "It was impressive to see how this project has come together for this little nonprofit in Orlando."

Klinefelter said he was humbled by the responsiveness of the RFMA members.

"The vendors, especially Royalty Roofing, continue to make sure we are satisfied with the product," he said. "The work and materials are donated, but they treat us like a paying customer."

Stuart says the completed project will give him a real commercial-grade kitchen, one that will benefit Christian Service Center and other community groups. He envisions renting or loaning it to other groups who need an event or meeting space.

"This year's project brought in our largest pool of volunteers ever. The response was overwhelming, and I am so proud of our members and so grateful for their generosity," said Tracy Tomson, CAE, Executive Director at RFMA. "We were blessed to have such dedicated project chairs in Mark Gomolla and Ron Wilhite, who were committed and willing to see it through to the end. I also want to recognize the leadership of Jeff Dover and the members who stepped up to fulfill some of the unexpected needs that came up in the final months. It has been a marathon, but, we can see the finish line, and it feels great!"

## FOREVER CHANGED

RFMA Gives reveals an incontrovertible truth: A group of kind-hearted and generous people can impact real, measurable change.

Each project proves the power of empathy and compassion. It only takes one RFMA Gives experience to stoke a deep desire to get even more involved. And the rewards are immeasurable, going far beyond monetary returns. RFMA Gives uncovers the profound capacity of the human heart.

Thanks to the combined efforts and passion of everyone involved, the Christian Service Center is better poised to give needy central Floridians a hand up.

"It's easy to get wrapped up with what is happening in the world today and feel like you can't make a difference," said Tom Cullen, President/CEO at Facility Solutions. "Working with the RFMA Gives team proves that to be false. I have witnessed how RFMA Gives truly does make a difference. Our support helps open the door for individuals to re-start their lives and have a better outlook on the future."

"Before this project, I didn't realize how generous people are— people stepped forward to do this for nothing," Gomolla said. "RFMA Gives brings people together. If I see that you're involved year after year, it tells me that you're a giving, caring person. I'll never lose the connection with Robert, and Ron and Jeff are great people to work with. I consider them to be good friends after this project."

"The core RFMA team—Ron, Mark and Jeff—is a wonderful example of leadership," Stuart said. "When they couldn't find someone to donate something, they raised the money to pay for someone to do it. They could've said, 'Sorry; We can't do it,' but they said, 'No, it has to get done; it's part of the project.' That dedication goes far beyond what is expected. They couldn't have been more gracious, and that inspires us. When this project is complete, we can look at each other and say, 'Look what we did; How cool is this?'"