NOW SERVING: 100,000 MEALS EACH MONTH

In April, Second Helpings Hunger Relief staff and volunteers prepared and delivered more meals than its first year in operation 21 years ago. In all, staff and volunteers prepared and delivered 100,152 meals to more than 90 partner agencies in the month.

“This milestone is a testament to the powers of collaboration and service,” said Second Helpings CEO, Jennifer Vigran. “Thanks to the commitment of more than 750 active volunteers and our strong network of partner agencies, Second Helpings continues to grow at a pace that would have seemed impossible when this work began.”

Since 1998, Second Helpings has rescued more than 33 million pounds of food and transformed that food into more than 13 million meals to local partner agencies. Volunteers make each meal possible, logging more than 600,000 hours of service in the last 21 years.

While the April milestone was significant, volunteers quickly proved it was not an anomaly, by hovering around the 100,000 meals mark in the subsequent months. To stay consistent, volunteers are preparing and delivering around 4,500 meals each day. In all, Second Helpings will prepare and deliver more than 1 million meals this year, saving the Central Indiana nonprofit community more than $5.5 million in food costs.

“Regularly, as I talk to the staff who work with the homeless youth, we’re so grateful for what you guys do,” says CEO of Second Helpings partner agency Outreach Inc., Jason Chenoweth. “It pushes us so far forward. If you guys weren’t there, we would radically have to cut stuff with our youth. We wouldn’t be able to provide so much of what we provide.”
Since 2007, Goose The Market has evolved from a humble neighborhood store into a nationally renowned powerhouse of cured meat. “A lot of people thought we were crazy for opening a specialty market in Indianapolis,” says co-owner Mollie Eley. “They didn’t think there were enough people who appreciated the farm-to-table movement in Indy, and it was quite the opposite. Basically, as soon as we opened, we were busy.”

Eley and her husband Chris were working in Chicago prior to opening Goose, and they were initially planning to open a restaurant back in their hometown of Indianapolis when they fell in love with their flagship location at 25th and Delaware St. The size and limitations of the space made a restaurant impossible, which is what led to the market concept. “We knew we wanted to provide an outlet for the community to have access to local farms and local produce,” she says. “The good, clean, fair model is the core of who we are. We believe everybody should have access to that kind of food.”

Almost immediately after opening The Market, the Eleys started getting requests from Indy chefs for access to the sausages and salamis that Chris was making in-house at the market. Once again, the size of the space proved prohibitive. “We just didn’t have the space to produce it,” Mollie says. “Pretty much within a year of opening the market, the concept of Smoking Goose was developing in Chris’ mind. It took four years for it to come to fruition. It’s a huge USDA-inspected production facility where we make sausage, salami, and bacon. And we now have 22 distributors across all 50 states.”

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Since 2014, Smoking Goose has donated more than 13,300 pounds of product to Second Helpings in support of its Hunger Relief and Culinary Job Training efforts. Mollie’s aunt was a longtime Second Helpings volunteer, and Chris became familiar with the organization while working for Peter George when he was in culinary school. “The idea of the rehabilitation of people while also helping another group of people... obviously we were drawn to that,” Mollie says. “On the flipside of that, there’s a lot of product that people won’t buy, perfectly good product, but it doesn’t look pretty, or it’s the end piece of the ham...

Mollie underscores how easy Second Helpings’ Food Rescue staff makes donating food. “Not only are you guys good for the community, but you’re also good for business people,” she says. “It’s just seamless. You really take all of the work out of it.”

While the Eleys are proud that their product is used to feed hungry folks in Central Indiana, they’re also thrilled that students in the Culinary Job Training program are using Goose products as the building blocks for a new career. “Any opportunity that you have to educate people who are going out into the culinary world on the importance of buying local and using the whole animal and good, clean fair food – anytime you can get that mission to anybody that’s joining the food community, it’s beneficial for everybody involved,” Mollie says. “Just showing them that there’s more out there than commodity products. Obviously, there’s a place for that in every community, but it doesn’t have to be the only thing.”

Eley encourages other local businesses to support Second Helpings in similar ways. “We feel honored to be a part of your organization,” Mollie says. “We love our partnership. I would encourage anybody who is in the industry who is thinking about doing this or anything, it’s a great group to work with. And it just makes you feel good.”

CULINARY JOB TRAINING

WELCOMING TONYA

TONYA WATSON, CULINARY JOB TRAINING COORDINATOR

When you first meet Second Helpings’ Culinary Job Training Coordinator Tonya Watson, the first thing that draws you in is the calm, soothing nature of her voice. The trait proves useful in a position where each day she navigates the serious challenges faced by Second Helpings’ Culinary Job Training students as they strive for a new career and stable income. Many Second Helpings students lack support in their personal lives, and Watson tries to compensate on a granular level.

“Support can come from a simple smile,” she says, “a word of encouragement, a push to help move forward, or even a piece of candy from my desk.”

Watson has served in her position as Culinary Job Training Coordinator since late January. She brings years of administrative and training experience from the healthcare industry - Indiana Blood Center (now: Versiti Blood Center of Indiana), Community Hospital Network, IU Health) - as well as more recent nonprofit experience as Secretary of an organization called Fearfully & Wonderfully Made, an Indianapolis vitiligo community group. When asked what skills help Watson to excel at Second Helpings, she cites her compassion.

“You can teach anyone a job,” Watson says. “Anyone can pick up skills, and learn the technical skills of any job. But for what we do here and the people we serve, the innate compassion and empathy that I have within me, I think it’s a great fit... Ultimately, what makes me effective in this role is service. I am helping and serving others: students, coworkers, community. My heart feels a sense of accomplishment at the end of each day.”

In her nine months on the job, Watson has been consistently impressed by the servant leadership that Second Helpings staff and volunteers display each day. Watson carries with her a note from recent graduate Joshua McKinnie from Culinary Job Training Class 116 about his time in the Second Helpings program. “Love runs this place, and you can feel it when you’re here,” he said. Watson tries to live up to McKinnie’s description each day.

“It is my personal mission to affect positive change in the lives of those around me,” she says. “I feel honored to be a part of an organization that has this type of cause and effect.” As Culinary Job Training Coordinator, Watson has a unique perspective on the Culinary Job Training students. She works with each one from the moment they attend an info session until the day they graduate. With two new instructors and Executive Chef Kathy Jones moving into a leadership position, the Culinary Job Training program has seen significant changes in the last year. Watson is excited about the skills this team brings to the students they serve each day. “I love our instructors,” Watson says of chefs Keith Brooks and Kyle Barnett. “They complement each other so well... Chef Kathy is a remarkable leader, confident and steward. I have learned to be more forgiving and compassionate through her guidance.”

For her part, Watson isn’t interested in reinventing the wheel with her role. “I want to grow in this position and with this organization,” she says. “Our leadership has given me the opportunity to learn and grow beyond a measure that I was expecting. I respect and admire the leadership here.”
CJT GRADUATES

CLASS 123
Eric Jenkins, Jeremie Sheneman, Joneal Dunbar, Kelvin Washington, Hillary Merfeld, Shawanna Jackson, Dominique Sanders, Alexandra Campbell

TONIC BALL 2019 IS SOLD OUT

THANK YOU
to everyone who chose to fight hunger and poverty at Tonic Ball presented by Eskenazi Health again this year. General admission tickets are now sold out, and we are proud to report that sponsorship opportunities are sold out as well!

On Friday, November 22, more than 300 musicians will join forces to feed a community when they take five stages in Fountain Square to celebrate the music of Bob Marley, The Ramones, Beastie Boys, Diana Ross & The Supremes, and Radiohead.

This is the 18th installment of Tonic Ball. Proceeds from the event now send more than 100,000 meals to Central Indiana residents in need.

Tonic Ball makes a big impact with the help of our generous sponsors:

Full list of sponsors at https://www.secondhelpings.org/second-helpings-events/tonic-ball/