

Senior community meal site receives new look, menu items as part of project transformation

DENVER (Sept. 17, 2014) Sometimes it's the simple things in life—like a meal shared with others. [Hunger Free Colorado](#) and [CraftWorks Foundation](#), partnered on The Nourish Project, a new collaboration for the transformation of local senior community meal sites and menu items, with a goal to enhance the dining experience and increase participation. The first transformation reveal happened today at the Denver Inner City Parish, where the new meals, décor and dining area were unveiled; a welcome change by the seniors who participated in the selection process and have attended the program for years.

“I couldn't wait to get here to see the changes,” shared Elva Chavez, a 63-year-old participant of the older adult meal program at Denver Inner City Parish. “It's a dream come true for us.”

[The Nourish Project](#) launched in spring 2014, selecting Denver Inner City Parish as the pilot site for a refresh. The older adult meal program, federally known as the Congregate Meal Program, provides nutritious, social meals at no cost to individuals 60 years and older through the Older Americans Act. [Denver Inner City Parish](#), partaking in the meal program since 1984, can serve as many as 85 to 100 seniors per day, Wednesday through Saturday, from noon to 1 p.m. It is estimated that nearly one in seven Colorado seniors are unsure when or where they will get their next meal.

“Dignity, empowerment and diversity are what this process and results are about,” said Allyson Sawtell, director of senior programs at the Denver Inner City Parish. “This project helps give more dignity to the place, the program and the participants, and that's important.”

During the project process, seniors recreated the meals and dining area to match their tastes by participating in a survey, taste tests and the selection of tables, utensils, linens and other items. Registered dietitians and caterers created new, tasty meals that met federal nutrition guidelines and appealed to the seniors, and volunteers from CraftWorks Foundation and its restaurants and Hunger Free Colorado assisted with repainting and decorations in the Parish's community hall, where the older adult meals are served. The newly-selected meals include steak fajitas, carne asada tacos, spaghetti with turkey meatballs and pork carnitas with refried beans. The site also has freshly-painted walls and round tables, as well as new tablecloths, water pitchers, silverware and other décor.

“Collaboration from the restaurant and nonprofit sectors were key in the transformation, but it was only successful due to the direct involvement from those participating in the program,” said Kathy Underhill, executive director of Hunger Free Colorado, one of the lead collaborators. “The older adults guided the decision-making process, re-imagining their meals and space, and creating an inviting experience that encourages continued and increased participation.”

Elva Chavez, who lives in the area, started coming to Denver Inner City Parish seven years ago, following a diagnosis of diabetes. She started eating more vegetables but also found a stronger sense of community and togetherness. Elva was one of the dozen participants involved in the transformation of the site and meals.

“It’s important because we gather here. Some can’t eat at home, and some come here to socialize. It’s different than being at home alone,” said Elva of The Nourish Project. “I loved the meal. It’s easier to converse and see each other. I like everything.”

The CraftWorks Foundation provided volunteers and \$50,000 to help fund the transformation as part of its commitment to creating innovative and sustainable ways to alleviate hunger in local communities. Headquartered in Broomfield, the Foundation is the charitable arm of CraftWorks Restaurants and Breweries, parent company of a number of popular restaurant brands, including Old Chicago, Rock Bottom, ChopHouse and Gordon Biersch.

“The CraftWorks Foundation is thrilled to partner on this project, as we’re dedicated to the communities in which our restaurants serve,” said Angie Leach, executive director of CraftWorks Foundation. “It’s been very fulfilling to craft tasty, nutritious meal experiences that not only build community and nourish the total person but are easy to replicate, which is key to this project’s success.”

The Nourish Project in Denver also received support from Denver Inner City Parish, Volunteers of America and the State Unit on Aging with the Colorado Department of Human Services, along with The Brown Palace, Colorado Latino Age Wave, the Active Older Adults program at La Alma Recreation Center and Tapiz at Mariposa Apartments.

Learn more about The Nourish Project and view photos of the senior community meal site transformation at HungerFreeColorado.org.

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About Craftworks Foundation

In 2000, the CraftWorks Foundation was formed as a 501(c) (3) non-profit entity and serves as the charitable arm of CraftWorks Restaurants and Breweries, Inc., parent company to Old Chicago, Rock Bottom, ChopHouse and Gordon Biersch, as well as other restaurant brands. The Foundation’s primary focus addresses hunger alleviation within its communities, and assistance to its 10,000 employees through scholarships, financial literacy and crisis relief. Since inception, the Foundation has contributed millions of dollars to positively impact the communities in which CraftWorks’ restaurants do business.

About Hunger Free Colorado

Hunger Free Colorado, a statewide nonprofit organization founded in 2009, leads efforts to connect families and individuals to food resources, and to create positive changes in systems, policies and social views, so no Coloradan goes hungry. Learn more about the issue and how to take action at HungerFreeColorado.org.