

Vital VOICE dedicates this issue to our Non-profit of the month

# FOOD OUTREACH

We all need proper nutrition to thrive. For persons undergoing treatment for a life-threatening illness, nourishing food can mean the difference between a rapid decline in health or the opportunity to best optimize their medical treatments. Add to that, limited financial resources and the access to nutritious food can be out of reach – often an insurmountable situation.

For 21 years, Food Outreach has continued to be the only organization in the greater St. Louis area that focuses on providing nutritional support to low-income individuals living with HIV/AIDS or cancer. In 2009, Food Outreach expects to provide 410,000+ nutritious meals to more than 1500 clients, currently ages 5 to over 90, who reside in 137 Missouri and Illinois zip codes.

The nonprofit organization began with a small group of concerned friends who prepared meals for their friends diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. At a time when information about the virus and the dietary needs of those infected was limited, the goal was simply to provide convenient high calorie meals to people who were often too ill to cook. Today, armed with research data from medical and scientific studies, the focus is on the tailored nutritional needs of its clients. In 2006, Food Outreach voted to expand its mission to include cancer clients, a logical decision as both cancer and HIV/AIDS are diseases characterized by malnutrition and share similar dietary requirements.

Food Outreach's on-staff Chef and on-staff Registered Dietitian develop menus that help clients maintain their strength and cope with disease and treatment side effects to improve their clients' quality of life and best optimize their treatments. Each client meets with the Dietitian at enrollment into the program (and at subsequent visits) to receive a nutrition status assessment and personal nutrition counseling. Clients may receive the equivalent of two meals per day through a combination of scratch-made nutritious meals and groceries. Up to 28 meals are ordered every two weeks, year round, from a changing menu. Food Outreach also provides group nutrition education and cooking classes, a weekly congregate hot meal lunch, nutrition status monitoring, and meal home delivery to homebound clients.

Food Outreach is located in a 10,000 square foot facility in midtown St. Louis. A dedicated staff and a team of volunteers work side by side preparing nutritious meals and distributing groceries to those most vulnerable in our community – low income men, women and children battling a life-threatening illness. Although Food Outreach is experiencing a record-breaking need for its services – more than 1100 meals per day – it remains committed to its tradition of never turning away an eligible person from its doors. Through corporate, foundation and individual giving, combined with canned food drives and revenue from special events, such as the upcoming A Tasteful Affair on April 18, Food Outreach continues to meet the needs of its clients.

*To learn more about Food Outreach services, volunteer opportunities, or to make a donation, visit [foodoutreach.org](http://foodoutreach.org) or call 314.652.3663 (FOOD).*

