

Among Friends Meal Program Newsletter December 2024 Volume 1



Welcome to the Among Friends Meal Program Community!

AN OVERVIEW

The Among Friends Meal Program (AFMP) has been providing free, nutritious prepared meals and other assistance in a safe and welcoming environment to all seeking food, support and fellowship in the greater Newburyport community for over 20 years. This is our mission statement and commitment.

AFMP volunteers continue to prepare three meals a week including Monday dinner (5-6 pm), Tuesday lunch (11 am -12:30 pm) and Friday lunch (11 am -12:30 pm). Along with table service dining offered in the Church Hall, take-out, and delivery to local towns are available for each meal. The program welcomes all who come, and provides delivery for 50 to 60 more. Presently over 120 home cooked, nutritious meals are prepared, packaged, and served three days per week. Included are 20 family style meals we provide for the nearby Link House program.

We are located in St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 166 High Street, Newburyport, MA 01950. Our number at St. Paul's is 978 465 5351. Please reach us regarding our services, and to volunteer or ask questions. Visit our newly launched website www.amongfriendsmealprogram.com

The AFMP utilizes the newly renovated St. Paul's kitchen and adjacent hall space. St. Paul's has long recognized the program as a ministry of the church and the AFMP is mentioned on the church's website and face book page. The program continues to be extremely grateful for the church's unwavering support.



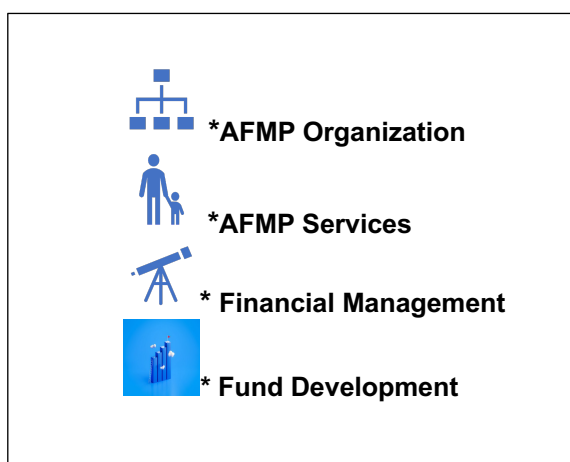
This newsletter, our first, is intended Quarterly to inform, entertain, and inspire everyone it touches. The past few years have been transformative for the AFMP in many ways. Bonnie Schultz, the program's long time Director, along with a dedicated group of over 70 volunteers, have led efforts to improve our facility, expand in-house services, increase collaboration with other local meals and food providers, create internal boards to plan and ensure our future, and develop a short and long term AFMP Strategic Plan. We have joined the Seacoast Food Hub facility in nearby Salisbury built and operated by Our Neighbor's Table. Although we have increased our dry, cold, and frozen storage space at St. Paul's in recent years, the Food Hub enables the program to vastly increase food storage capacities in a new state of the art facility a mere five minutes away.

Following you'll read more about the AFMP Strategic Plan, holiday happenings at AFMP, spotlight on one of our partners, fundraisers, recipes, and encouragement to help and donate towards our mission.

AMONG FRIENDS MEAL PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLANNING

During the past year a strategic planning committee was created with the director, Bonnie Schultz, and a dedicated group of seven AFMP volunteers, the Parish Administrator of St. Paul's, the Director of Newburyport Community Services, the Outreach Specialist with the Newburyport Senior/Community Center and a facilitator/consultant. The group met numerous times to write the plan and subsequently presented the documents to the St. Paul's vestry and Father Jarred of St. Paul's Church. The plan is to be implemented in stages and serves as a roadmap for program operations now and in the future. We have recognized the plan as a dynamic and living document to be revised and improved as time and experience dictate.

Strategic planning identified four main Focus areas which were then broken down into detailed high-level objectives, action items, and organizational charts. The Focus areas are:



AFMP Organization high level objectives include:

- Grow and strengthen Advisory Board membership
- Increase resource depth (volunteers, Church)
- Create a sustainable organization
- Reduce dependency on specific resources
- Build capacity to deliver more services to guests
- Formalize / document governance structure

Action items indicate how objectives would be achieved. Currently, the Director has traditionally carried out most of the program's organizational roles and responsibilities. Various responsibilities are now being delegated according to the plan and include transitional and succession planning. The Among Friends Meal Program Advisory Board intends to solicit new members and to expand the member's roles including establishing committees such as operations, fundraising, and communications.

AFMP Services high level objectives include:

- Expand scope of services for guests
- Collaborate with other agencies to expand service offering
- Expand volunteer program
- Develop and maintain data on service statistics
- Measure impact of isolation for the elderly
- Improve understanding of guest needs
- Establish resources required to deliver additional services

Action items, for example, to include expanding guest services, such as in addition to meals, haircuts and laundry hours are currently offered. Clothing and a warming center are provided. In the future, shower and personal hygiene hours could be added. Referral service to guests to facilitate them receiving available and needed forms of state and federal assistance is to be implemented along with increased collaboration with other agencies. Collaboration will include cooperation in bulk food ordering, common resource guides, data and statistics collection, and regular and effective communication towards achieving common goals.

AFMP Financial Management high level objectives include:

- Enhance annual budget and monitoring system process
- Investigate and identify new sources/opportunities for income
- Enhance financial reporting

Action items include for example establishing an AFMP Finance Committee to compile, oversee and report comprehensive annual budgets with all expenses and income. Technology platforms and accounting systems would be reviewed and strengthened. The committee works in collaboration with St. Paul's Church.

AFMP Fundraising and Marketing, Publicity high level objectives include:

- Establish a more formal annual fundraising plan
- Increase fundraising income to fund expanded services
- Improve donor data capture and analysis
- Improve brand and community awareness
- Establish a social media presence

Action items, for example, to include establishing a Fundraising Committee charged with developing a more formal fundraising plan, identifying new grant sources, increasing grant writing, implementing donor tracking system, improving donor relationships and recognition, and planning fundraising events. A Communications Committee will be formed to evaluate and implement effective means of creating greater community awareness and outreach. The newly launched AFMP website will reach a wide audience, receive informative and current updates, and is a new means of accepting donations.

Strategic Plan: Next Steps

The strategic plan after internal review and presentation to St. Paul's church representatives is ready for action. Operations, finance, fundraising and communications committees will be established and take the lead on prioritizing action items and putting forth initial timelines for completion. Reports of progress at regular meetings of the AFMP Advisory Council are important to maintain strategic plan focus and continued progress.



HAPPENINGS AT AFMP

CHRISTMAS DINNER in a bag

Our dedicated and festive volunteers are assembling and packing a full holiday meal for distribution to 100 families. This year's meal is comprised of pork tenderloins, mac and cheese, vegetables, dinner rolls, pies, and apple juice. These meals can be easily prepared at home and are offered for various sized households. Please contact Deb Hay, St. Paul's Administrator, at 978-465-5351 to request a Christmas meal package. Deliveries will take place Monday, December 23rd.

CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

An ongoing tradition each year is that all of our guests will receive Christmas stockings filled with treats and toiletries. Volunteers will stuff many stockings with useful personal items and tasty treats to be distributed before Christmas.

FUNDRAISING

Thanksgiving pie and dessert sale

Our partner Nourishing the North Shore donated enough apples to make 100 apple pies and desserts (Nourishing the North Shore supplies AFMP fresh produce and fruit throughout the year). Twenty-five volunteers gathered together to make apple pies, delicious individual apple dump cakes and apple cider donut bread puddings. We were able to sell everything that was made and raised over \$1500 for the program.



Turkey Classic Golf Tournament

During the first week in November, the Wolfe Club of Newburyport held a charity golf tournament at the Apple Hill Golf Club in East Kingston, New Hampshire to benefit local programs who help those in need and who are food insecure. Representatives from AFMP attended the tournament to network with potential donors and to provide information and outreach. The Wolfe Club generously presented AFMP a check for over \$1000 raised by participants in the golf tournament.

Seacoast Food Hub 50 Campaign

Our partner, Our Neighbor's Table, in Amesbury and Salisbury, is presently holding a vital fundraiser for the Seacoast Food Hub's final construction and opening costs. Their campaign goal is \$6 million dollars by December 31, 2024. They have raised over \$5.6 million and need to get over the top by the end of the year. Local food and meal providers will be utilizing the hub for storage, transportation vehicles, and numerous other resources. For additional information and to donate, make sure to visit Ourneighborstable.org/50.

Among Friends Meal Program Contributions

This is the season when many charities are asking for donations. AFMP exists only through the generosity of local businesses and individuals who donate money and their time. Please consider a monetary donation to AFMP now or anytime during the year to ensure the continuation of our mission of providing nutritious meals, fellowship and additional services to those in need. Donations are written and sent to the Among Friends Meal Program at St. Paul's Church, 166 High Street, Newburyport MA 01950 OR go to our new website www.amongfriendsmealprogram.com

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

[Fantini Baking Co.](#) [Haverhill, MA](#) www.fantinibakery.com

For more than ten years Fantini has reliably donated fresh rolls and breads every Thursday. We are forever grateful to have them as an invaluable partner who not only is saving the program thousands of dollars, but helps us prepare a wide variety of meals with their quality products.



A SEASONAL RECIPE TO ENJOY

Go to the following website and try the delicious Caramel Apple Dump Cake that AFMP volunteer and accomplished dessert maker, Mary Fratto, made for the Thanksgiving apple pie and dessert fundraiser.

<https://www.southernliving.com/caramel-apple-dump-cake-7565786>

Thank you for reading the inaugural Among Friend's Meal Program newsletter. Please contact us with suggestions, comments, and ideas for our next edition.

