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Did you know...

• TASK has an online newsletter? If you'd like to read more great stories about TASK and how your support is helping, please visit trentonsoupkitchen.org.

Happy Holidays!

Home for the Holidays

According to Deborah, the last 20 months have been "an up-and-down situation." In 2008, like many during the recession, her family dynamic changed: Deborah's two young grandsons moved into her Trenton apartment with her.

"I had a place for 10 years," remembers Deborah. "Had a job. Maintained the house. I made it my own. I had gardens. One was a butterfly and hummingbird garden. It was right outside the kitchen window. The kids enjoyed it. They could sit at the kitchen table while they were eating their breakfast and we'd see all the butterflies... I was planning on buying it."

That was not to be.

A little more than a year ago, Deborah's apartment building was condemned. Last year, she and her grandchildren, Isaiah and Malachi, now 8 and 12, were forced to move into a temporary family shelter. "That's when I started coming here [to TASK]," she says. "To get them routine, food, help."

"The shelter's not permanent," explains Deborah. "We were only supposed to be at the shelter for 3 months, but it ended up being 8. But while we were there, I still couldn't find a place to live." Eventually, they had to leave.

Last January, the three rented a room from a friend.

"We had one bed, one closet, and a table with a TV on it. The boys had the bed, I had the floor. No mattress," recalls Deborah. "That room was so small it couldn't even fit another mattress. Our clothes were in bins. No place for a dresser. No place for much of anything. It was very cluttered."

Then, one day, the electricity was shut off and her friend raised her rent from \$250 to \$800. "I couldn't afford it," she said.

"The boys get SSI (Supplemental Security Income). That's the only income we have coming in. The money gets school clothes and stuff, but you can't really find a place for less than \$1,000, unless it's in a bad area."

"I told Lisa [TASK cook] about the situation and she introduced me to Julie, TASK case manager." Deborah didn't have county or state identification at the time. "Without ID, I can't fill out applications, because you don't have anything to show anyone who you are... Julie helped me."

After receiving her ID, Deborah was able to submit housing forms and rental applications.

"I know a lot of people who gave up — they took their life or just stopped. You can't just sit and say things will come to you. I worked hard." Then her eyes lit up: "I finally got an apartment. I'm thankful that I'm still moving forward," she smiled.

This Thanksgiving, Deborah and her grandchildren are looking forward to spending the holiday at home, and Malachi says he's "looking forward to a Thanksgiving turkey feast."

"Before, I couldn't bring anything home. I didn't even consider it home — it was just a place to lay my head," remembers Deborah. "Now I got a place. Now I want to start those family traditions again."



After finding TASK, Isaiah (left), Deborah, and Malachi now have a place to stay. "The biggest surprise was how much I was helped. How much people here care. They treat us like we belong."



Executive Director's Corner

"Courage is grace under pressure."

— Ernest Hemingway

I hope you will take a few minutes to read the stories in this issue of "Taste of TASK," because they are stories of courage and grace.

Read what our patrons are thankful for and consider the courage it takes to share gratefulness for what many of us may take for granted. Having an "attitude of gratitude" is hard work, but our TASK patrons make it look easy.

Each day at TASK, I get to see the extraordinary spirit of our patrons. Most face a combination of challenges in their lives, ones they likely never expected to have to grapple with. I marvel at their resilience and am warmed by "Thank you," "God bless," and "Have a pleasant day" as they pass by my office. There is a certain grace that is shown and felt at TASK and I am grateful to be embraced by it.

May you and your loved ones be embraced by gratitude and grace on Thanksgiving Day and the holiday season that follows.

Joyce E. Campbell

**"The most important trip
you may take in life is
meeting people halfway."**

~Henry Boyle~

Meal Counts

July – September

Escher Street Facility:	42,843
Medallion Care:	4,004
Hightstown Community Kitchens:	4,284
South Trenton Soup Kitchens:	2,690
West Trenton Soup Kitchen:	647
North Trenton Soup Kitchens:	1,202
Princeton Community Kitchens:	2,077
Send Hunger Packing Meals:	4,120
Yardville Soup Kitchen:	1,373
Extra Meals/Afterschool Programs:	5,440
Total Meals Served:	68,680

TASK Celebrates Students' Success



The Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) proudly held its fifth annual Student Graduation Celebration October 19th. A special dinner, presentations of high school diplomas, certificates and proclamations, an inspirational keynote speech by life coach Faith Saunders, and a rousing standing ovation rounded out a warm and jubilant evening that honored the graduates' achievements.

Guests of the honorees and their families — one included four generations! — were treated to a talk by Ms. Saunders, author and president of Discover a New Future, who shared 8 life lessons she has learned along the way. Among them, she noted, each person can decide "what comes after 'I am.'" And whatever that is — hopefully positive — "it will come looking for you."

Nearly 100 guests attended the magical evening at the soup kitchen coordinated by TASK's own Diane Subber. Graduates

sat at tables decorated in white, black, and green, with their families, local dignitaries, Board members, tutors, and staff for a delicious meal prepared by TASK chef Paul Jensen and expertly served by volunteers from Living Waters Lutheran Church and Bonner students from The College of New Jersey.

Nine of the graduates earned their high school diploma this year. Their stories are as unique as their lives and the challenges they've faced. Graduate Andre Bowland's next goal is to join the military or law enforcement. And Pandora Ward said, "It means a lot that I have my diploma. I'm in my second semester at Mercer County Community College now, studying forensic science. I hope to work in an evidence lab someday."

Two honorees received their ServSafe food-handling certificate. Dan Hoppock — who makes a killer key lime pie — and Michele Gass hope the certificate will help them go after their dreams. Michele plans to have her own food truck business with her brother. "I thank the soup kitchen for giving me the opportunity to take the course here," she said.

Graduate Angie Yambo's delighted mom expressed so well the joy and pride in the room: "The diploma — there are so many things it allows you to be."

The Faces Behind TASK's Doors

Receptionist Dianne Corbett perches serenely behind the reception desk near the front door of the TASK dining hall with a phone at her left elbow and a potted plant covered in magenta blooms on the ledge of her cubicle, ready to welcome and sign in the adult education students, first patrons of the day. "They inspire me," she flashes her gentle smile, "because they are determined to get that diploma."

People in the dining room will soon hear Dianne's cheery voice echo through the PA system: "Back door, please!" That's a signal to Terence Jones, who takes care of receiving and inventory at TASK, to be ready to help donors or delivery people unload.



Stationed at the back door, Terence is a whirlwind of activity, enthusiasm radiating from his beaming face. While belting out hearty hellos or a few bars to a popular song as staff trickle in, he organizes a small mountain of bakery items and produce donated that morning by local markets. He will make quick work of it ("I like to keep the place neat and welcoming," he says), to make room for the cases of bananas, barrels of athletic socks, bags of canned goods and personal care items, trays of cupcakes, and peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich bags that donors will bring by throughout the day to support TASK's many services, never mind the pallets of meat and frozen vegetables TASK needs to feed thousands of people.

Between the two of them, Dianne and Terence meet nearly everyone who comes to the soup kitchen. Dianne gets to know some of the patrons: "It hurts to see the grandmothers with their grandchildren. I try to look out for them when they come in," she says. She also worries about the working patrons: "These people who work, they do have a place to go home, but they don't have food to eat. Their refrigerators are empty. They really aren't making enough money. ... They got enough to just pay the rent and nothing else."

"When I came to work at TASK four years ago, the biggest surprise was the amount of people who depend on TASK, and not just in Trenton, but at the satellite sites, too," said Terence, lines appearing on his forehead. "When I see people in Princeton and Hightstown who are going through this dilemma, it amazes me. It keeps me humble and lets me know, at any given time, I could be in that situation."

They also see the best of the human spirit — the many volunteers who give of their time, children who ask for donations to the soup kitchen instead of birthday gifts, patrons who find a home or get a job.

Dianne has been minding the front door, making announcements, welcoming patrons, signing in volunteers and answering the phones for 14 years. She won't call attention to the many ways she's there to lend a helping hand, or that she keeps track of staff birthdays and lifts morale when it's been a specially intense day. "It's really about [the people who come in through] the door," she said.

For Terence, it's also "about the door": "My area I call the happy door. People who come through my door are happy because they feel they are helping someone, dropping stuff off. It touches my heart. I want them to know we are appreciative, because that's how the kitchen is run — we couldn't do it without the donations that come in and the volunteers who are here.

"If you really, really want to get your life together, and you're serious about it," says Terence, "TASK is the place where you can get it done. You can get food *and* somebody to help write your resume. You have so many different avenues at TASK to restore your life."

Dianne agrees, "There are people who come to this place who say, 'I am so happy I found it.' ... I look forward to work every morning. I love it when people who come back after a long time away say, 'You're still here!' I love the people I work with — they're my extended family." Terence adds, "No day's the same. Different volunteers, different situations. That's exciting to me. I love to meet new people — that's what keeps me coming back."

Holiday Drives & Volunteer Info

Make the holiday season bright for TASK families!



Adopt-A-Family

TASK's Adopt-A-Family program helps families celebrate the holidays by providing them with a few gifts from their wish lists. To receive your family profile, call (609) 695-5456.

Winter supplies needed

Throughout the winter, TASK distributes coats, hats, gloves, and personal care items to families in need.

We are seeking donations of the following items:

- * Men's hats
- * Men's gloves
- * Scarves
- * Men's hoodies/sweatshirts — sizes Medium and larger
- * Men's white crew or tube socks.

Please deliver them to TASK by December 18th.

Sign up to volunteer during the holidays!

TASK needs volunteers during the winter months. To volunteer, call (609) 695-5456.

Call after December 1st to reserve a volunteer date for a specific holiday or during the holiday break.

