

# Supporting the Community: Shepherd's Table



What the members of the Seekers Community do, along with a multitude of other volunteers, donors and staff of **Shepherd's Table** is to gladden the hearts of every human being who seeks services with us.

While our mission is to provide basic human services, our greater goal is to impact people's lives, creating an atmosphere of welcoming, friendship, support, and hope.

by Jackie Coyle



Executive Director, Shepherd's Table

A reflection by Muhammed hangs on my office wall, positioned in such a way that every time that I look at my computer screen I see the message. As I glance at it and take in its impact, I am reminded of the incredibly important work we do each day at Shepherd's Table. "What actions are most excellent? To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured. All God's creatures are God's family, and he is the most beloved of God who does the most good to God's creatures."

What the members of the Seekers Community do, along with a

multitude of other volunteers, donors and staff of Shepherd's Table is to gladden the hearts of every human being who seeks services at Shepherd's Table. While our mission is to provide basic human services, our greater goal is to impact people's lives, creating an atmosphere of welcoming, friendship, support, and hope. In spite of poverty and often homelessness we want to bring joy to folks and gladden their hearts. We want to continue serving a meal every night. We want to offer those social services that will help folks today and give them hope as they move into tomorrow. We want to continue to meet the health needs of our clients as we partner with Mobile Med in offering preventive and primary health care. We want to improve people's vision through our free eye clinic and clothe folks through our clothes closet. We want the immigrants in the community to know that we are here to help them to obtain basic services and to maneuver the legalization process.

The summer of 2008 was like no other. It was then that the surge in new clients and dinner guests began. The economic recession touched us immediately and throughout the summer, fall and winter months we experienced a 33% increase in our number of people needing basic food and social services. It is only now that we are seeing a slight drop in that surge. We do not know what the coming months will hold.

Despite the recession we have remained strong in purpose and singular in our focus to accomplish our mission each day. We created a budget for 2009 that reflected more cautious spending while accommodating increased services. Two staffing positions that became vacant were changed and only one position was filled. Staff did not receive cost of living increases or raises in salary. Greater emphasis has been placed on the acquisition of in-kind donations, whether they are items or services. We have explored and begun to better utilize the strengths and gifts of present and future volunteers. We have made more "asks" and gratefully received much more. We are in the process of better understanding

current financial giving trends and positioning ourselves to take full advantage of these new trends. We are slowly but surely moving into the social networking world. OK we are not there yet but hopefully very soon you will see us on face book, follow us on twitter and read our e-news. You'll see a new cleaner, inspiring, informative web site. Hope remains at Shepherd's Table. We will weather the economic storm and come out more strongly engaging the community as we serve our clients and dinner guests.

I invite your continued support in ways that are known and in ways that may become known as you explore how to use your gifts for the good of all. Some known opportunities are: serve on site during our dinner meal or in our resource center, to make casseroles, to join our Board or support committees, to assist in special events once or twice a year, to volunteer at Button Farm and bring donated fresh organic vegetables back to Shepherd's Table on Wednesdays or Saturdays, to offer your expertise in marketing, PR, or technology. For volunteering please call Haile Gebregzabher at 301-585-6463 or e-mail him at [haileg\(at\)shepherdstable.org](mailto:haileg@shepherdstable.org).

We are grateful for the Seeker's Community and for the on-going support of our mission and for all the good work that it does in the world. It is for all of us to do good in our world, to change systems and lives and the energy in the spaces that we live and work and in the universe.

[www.shepherdstable.org](http://www.shepherdstable.org)