



City of Cambridge

R-13.

IN CITY COUNCIL

July 26, 1999

COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
COUNCILLOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
MAYOR DUEHAY
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
COUNCILLOR REEVES
COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: Barry Goldberg was so distressed about the plight of hungry children that he decided to do something about the problem; and

WHEREAS: Barry ran the Boston Marathon to raise funds for Food for Free Committee and enlisted fifty-two others to pledge \$3900; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record extending its appreciation to Barry Goldberg and the other participants who were instrumental in raising funds that will feed hungry children; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to Barry Goldberg on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council July 26, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- *XO Margaret Drury*

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

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leaving early to catch her bus on a regular basis. Practically no manager, however, will abide an employee rushing out early for family crises. Many of those coming off of welfare come to the job with a bundle of family problems that are compounded by poverty. In one survey, for example, eighty percent of the heads of families on welfare in Boston reported having children with mental or physical problems (which may or may not qualify the family for a time-limit waiver). There are not enough day care or preschool spots for healthy

children, let alone those with special needs. By necessity their children's problems can become these parents' full-time jobs.

The Boston area has one of the highest cost-of-childcare rates in the country. Parents in low paying jobs or jobs with irregular hours are forced to put together a patchwork of provisions for their children that often leave them poorly attended or even physically or emotionally at risk. Between transportation and childcare, the cost in dollars and/or family hardship is often too high for the available job, leaving poor families with literally

no options. Poor women experience stress factors in much higher proportions than the general public, adding health problems of their own to the challenge of keeping a family going, to say nothing of pulling it out of poverty.

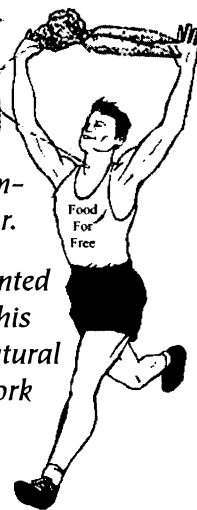
Helping people to move from welfare to work will take concerted political action. It will require willingness on the voters' part to invest in new and innovative programs that will offer people a real hand-up and not simply a kick-off. ■

Boston Marathon Runner Raises \$8000 for Food For Free!

Barry Goldberg took his first Marathon run seriously. Not only did he finish the race in a little over 4 hours, a feat in itself, but he got 52 people to pledge over \$3900. This amount was matched by the Goldberg Foundation, bringing the total to \$7900—all donated to FFF! Barry then celebrated his accomplishment by hosting a barbecue for supporters where he announced plans to repeat the effort next year.

Barry, a Cambridge resident and a father, was deeply concerned by reports of childhood hunger and wanted to do something that would help alleviate this problem in his community. By a fortunate coincidence, his mother grew up in the building at 11 Inman Street, where FFF is housed, so the connection seemed a natural one. In addition, Barry has volunteered on our truck, which gave him hands on experience with our work and a view of the programs we serve.

Thanks so much Barry! We look forward to even more stunning results next year.

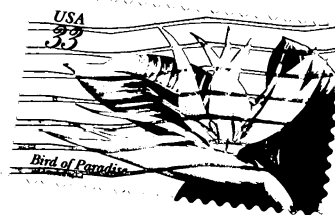


This edition of The Food Line was produced by Chad Cover, Diane Tosh and Janet Murray.
Food For Free is a non-profit hunger relief organization to which all contributions are tax-deductible, as well as greatly appreciated.
Contact us at Food For Free, 11 Inman Street, Cambridge, MA 02139, or 617-868-2900



The Food For Free Committee, Inc.
11 Inman Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Timothy Toomey
88 Sixth St.
Cambridge MA 02141



The Food Line



News and Information from Food For Free

Spring 1999

An Interview With Stephanie Morris Hull: Spirit of the Pantry

Stephanie Morris Hull has been the Director of the Margaret Fuller House Food Pantry for the past seven years, and is a member of the center's Board of Directors. When you meet her, you know immediately that you are in the presence of a rare spirit. We spoke to Stephanie at her home in Cambridge's Area Four, surrounded by awards from numerous neighborhood and City agencies for her "Outstanding Volunteer" work and community activism in a variety of fields. Her remarks were filled with warmth and laughter.

Food For Free: Please tell us something about Margaret Fuller House and your work there.

Stephanie Morris Hull: Margaret Fuller House is a community center which runs the Food Pantry as well as an afterschool and meal program for children, a day care center, a tutoring program, and rooms for neighbor-

hood events. I am responsible for the Pantry. I see that it is stocked when the food is delivered—Food For Free comes every Wednesday, and we make regular pick-ups at the Food Bank. On the other days I like to make up my food packages before we open. I usually have an idea who will be coming when, and I know what their needs are. I check the people in and check their identification.

Why is it necessary to check identification?

Well, we can only serve each person once a month. We give different amounts of food according to the size

of the family, so I have that information recorded also. We serve approximately 300 people each month, some picking up for small and some for large families.

How would you describe the population that uses the pantry?

I would say mostly elderly. But we get many young people with families.



JANET MURRAY AND STEPHANIE MORRIS HULL TAKING CARE OF CAMBRIDGE.

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What Job? Life in Massachusetts after welfare reform.

In 1995 Massachusetts' legislators dismantled the State's welfare system and replaced it with a rickety program of "transitional assistance." Among the most important changes were those that placed a two-year time limit on benefits, those requiring recipients with school-age children to work or to volunteer part-time during the two years they do receive aid, and those denying benefits to children born after the law's passage. The reform was motivated by a simple idea: "Any job is a good job." Anyone who has

brought home a paycheck knows that any job is not a good job, or a job that you can get to, find childcare to free you for, or that pays enough to live on.

Welfare "reform" has been fabulously successful—if the law's goal was to kick people off the dole: the rolls in Massachusetts are down by 39%, falling from around 310,000 in 1994 to around 191,000 by the end of 1997. But underneath the impressive numbers lie some disturbing facts for those affected. After nearly fifty years

of decline, poverty is rising in some states; Massachusetts is one of them.

According to a recent Department of Transitional Assistance survey, only one in four respondents had worked for a year or more at wages above \$250 per week. Another twenty five percent worked, but earned less than \$250 per week (well below the poverty line). Another twenty percent were back on welfare. And, most distressing of all, the remaining thirty percent were neither employed nor on welfare.

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Some are working and just need a little help so they can pay the rent and also keep enough food. Others depend on the food network entirely and must go to several pantries and meal programs during the month.

Has your client base changed much over the years?

It's growing. We always see more people coming in.

Do you have any hope of that changing?

(laughing) No.

What do you think it would take to reduce hunger?

More funding for these programs. Jobs! People are worried about getting enough to eat, about feeding their families, what they need for their children. The children need fresh foods. Everyone wants those. Thursdays [following the Food For Free produce delivery] are our busiest days.

Have you ever run short of food, had to turn someone away?

We never run out of food because we estimate the number of people who will come and distribute the food accordingly. Sometimes people come back more than once a month, and I have to tell them that it is not their time. (laughing) I tell them, but I can

usually find something for them. I can't turn someone away if they need. **Stephanie, your cousin just told me that you run the neighborhood, the people you work with say that you always have great energy and compassion, our drivers love your sense of humor. What is your secret?**

I treat people real well, and everyone equal. I'm always pleasant, even when I have a problem. Ever since I was born, my mom says this is me, the real me. I wake up in the morning like this and I am like this all day. A guy came in for food last week when his wife was in the hospital. He was crying, so I gave him a hug. When he came back he told me how much that had meant to him. I listen to people, I laugh with them, I cry with them, I hug them up, I pray with them.

Not everyone realizes that you volunteer your time at the Pantry. How did you become a community activist, and how do you decide where to devote your energy?

I grew up in Trinidad where my whole family was active in the community, teachers, social workers, I studied nursing. My husband and I came here about thirty years ago. We moved to this house in 1978 after I had already retired because of a knee injury. I cannot sit still for long or I

get extremely bored, I am always doing something. A friend told me about Margaret Fuller House across the street, about the Pantry and the children. I was interested in that work, and I just went over. I get involved all around here, wherever I see a need.

You seem to keep so many others going, what keeps you going?

Once you have a good mind and a good heart it does not take too much to be pleasant. I get a lot of encouragement at Margaret Fuller, my clients always ask for me if I am out for a moment. I love people, I love communicating with people, and I love helping. I love to serve the community and I especially love children. When you love something, it just comes from in you, you try to do your best for it.

What do you see when you sit here by your window?

I keep my eye on the neighborhood, on Margaret Fuller House. Sometimes I go for a walk and check on the House. (laughs) My husband once asked me why I didn't just take my bed over there! Well, someone has to watch over the community, make sure everything is alright. 🍅

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These are the people, those who have "fallen through the cracks," that are coming to depend on the area's non-profit social service agencies (such as Food For Free) in increasing numbers.

Welfare reform has been met with a mixture of suspicion and hope. Maybe the new system really would move people from welfare to work. "Give me a chance," declared one woman on welfare, "and I'll show you." The new rules, however, are full of changes that seem hostile or indifferent to poor people's needs. One woman saw clearly what the reform would mean: "If they want us to work it's got to pay. Why does anybody have a job?" Another woman expressed both the hope and the cynicism that many shared: "I loved saying good-bye to that welfare office," she admitted. "But [I knew] I'd be back because there are so many problems."

There is an unfortunate misconception that those on welfare simply choose public assistance rather than work. In fact, many of the reasons people end up on welfare are the same

reasons it is difficult for them to find jobs now. Some find themselves with skills that are suddenly not required by industry, some lack basic skills and the where-with-all to obtain them, some face language or age barriers, some folks are the sole care-givers for families—children, aging parents, or siblings.

Strong social supports and investment in innovative educational programs—like subsidies for companies that agree to provide on-the-job training or support for part-time schooling/work schedules—are required to help people get the skills they need to support themselves and their families. As it stands, a former welfare recipient with school-age children is allowed to stay on welfare (until her two year limit is reached) if she works at White Hen Pantry, but not if she's enrolled at a local community college or in a GED program. The need for social support is a shadow that falls on every aspect of the effort to move from welfare to work.

Let's assume that a former welfare recipient is eligible for a particular job. The odds are, she may not be

able to get there. Ninety four percent of welfare recipients do not own cars, and have to rely on public transportation to get to work. This poses a problem: the vast majority of welfare recipients live either in the city or in the country, while the vast majority of new jobs are located in the suburbs. In the Boston area, one study found that two-thirds of all new entry-level jobs take longer than two hours to reach.

A two-hour commute may seem reasonable for a good job. But seventy percent of former welfare recipients work schedules that include nights and weekends—schedules that do not coincide with transit authorities' hours of operation. Let's say that a young mother finds a job at the Burlington Mall. Chances are that she will work a varied schedule. This means that some nights she will have to close up. MBTA buses to and from Burlington, stop running at 9:30, when the mall closes but not when the work inside the mall ends.

It takes a really compassionate manager to put up with an employee

Continued on back page



The Kindness of Others...

This quarter, The Boston Foundation, a great supporter of local community initiatives, awarded us a generous two year grant that will go far in helping Food For Free keep up with the growing need for hunger relief in our area. Many thanks!



You Too Can Own Your Own Tomato Plant! (well...to Share)

Food For Free is offering supporters an opportunity to purchase "Shares" in our organic farm, the Field of Greens—a Share of the yield included in our daily deliveries to Cambridge's food pantries, meal programs, shelters and drop-in centers.

In addition to tomatoes (actually one of our smaller crops) we grow delicious and nutritious collard greens, onions, potatoes, carrots, and peppers. Knowing that we have a steady supply of these vegetables, at least during the growing season, takes some of the risk out of the food rescue business.

As a Shareholder you will become part of the farm (of course, you're always welcome to come out to Lincoln to weed or harvest). You can think of each Share as a row of carrots or collards, sponsor one of our recipient agencies by purchasing a Share in their name, or buy Shares as gifts for those you care about. However you become involved, you will be helping put the healthiest, freshest food available in the hands of those who need it most—those who cannot afford it.

Field of Green Shares cost \$50.00 each and are accompanied by a certificate of ownership. Please call us at FFF, 617-868-2900, if you, your office, or a group of friends would like more information about investing in this wonderful project. 🍅



HARVEST TIME AT FOOD FOR FREE'S FIELD OF GREENS.



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Resolution #13

788R

Councillor Toomey re: Appreciation to Barry Goldberg who ran the Boston Marathon and fifty-two others who pledge \$3900 for the Food for Free Committee.

In City Council July 26, 1999

ORDER ADOPTED