



Project Open Hand
meals with love

Project Open Hand Selects New CEO, Paul Hepfer, M.S., to Advance Strategic Mission of “Food is Medicine”

For Immediate Release

SAN FRANCISCO – (February 19, 2019) – Project Open Hand, the largest provider of nutrition intervention for the critically ill and vulnerable in San Francisco and Oakland, today announced that it has named Paul Hepfer its new chief executive officer (CEO).

Hepfer joins Project Open Hand from The Health Trust and will succeed Mark A. Ryle in leading Project Open Hand’s mission of improving health outcomes by providing nutrition services and medically tailored meals to the Bay Area’s most vulnerable populations. His first day at Project Open Hand will be March 18.

“After a comprehensive search process of highly qualified candidates, the board is thrilled to welcome someone with Paul Hepfer’s experience to help Project Open Hand reach new heights,” said Board Chair, Tim Barabe. “We are at a critical moment in medical nutrition intervention and with Paul’s leadership we will continue to advance the Food is Medicine movement across California.”

“I am humbled and excited to join Project Open Hand, an organization whose mission and values so closely align with my own,” said Hepfer.

In his new role as CEO, Hepfer will be instrumental in continuing to leverage and expand Project Open Hand’s relationships with government partners, health plans and providers, private funders, donors and volunteers. As an advocate for medical nutrition intervention, he will further the mission of educating healthcare payers and providers on the role of medical nutrition in health outcomes.

Hepfer brings more than 20 years of experience in community health and wellness services. He previously served as senior vice president of programs for The Health Trust in San Jose and Santa Clara County for 13 years. In that role, he provided vision and leadership for The Health Trust’s entire portfolio of services, including HIV/AIDS programming, Meals on Wheels, the Jerry Larson Food Basket, community-based chronic disease prevention and management services, and a wide range of supportive housing programs.

Prior to joining The Health Trust, Hepfer was chief operating officer at Via Services for two years and executive director of Wellness and Education for the Pueblo of Sandia Native American Reservation in New Mexico for eight years. Hepfer holds a B.S. in Physical Education from Indiana State University and an M.S. in Park and Recreation Administration with a specialization in Therapeutic Recreation from Indiana University.

About Project Open Hand

Founded in 1985, Project Open Hand mission is to improve health outcomes and quality of life by providing nutritious meals to the sick and vulnerable, caring for and educating our community. What

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began as a grassroots response to the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, today POH is an innovative, outcomes-driven, client-centered partner in the public health and medical arenas. A leader in the “Food = Medicine” movement in California and nationwide, POH prepares 2,500 medically-tailored nutritious meals daily and provides 200 bags of healthy groceries to help sustain clients in San Francisco and Oakland. It is the largest provider of nutritious daily meals for seniors and adults with disabilities in San Francisco.

Headquartered in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood with a second location in Oakland, California, Project Open Hand employs a staff of 120, relies on the support of nearly 125 volunteers every day, and is governed by an 18-member Board of Directors.

About Food is Medicine Coalition

In June 2017, Governor Brown signed legislation providing \$6M for a three-year Medically Tailored Meals pilot program, a nutrition services coalition project that seeks to save millions in healthcare costs by providing medical nutrition intervention for chronically ill Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

Project Open Hand is a founding partner of the Food Is Medicine Coalition (FIMC), a national association of nonprofit, medically-tailored nutrition service providers. FIMC’s mission is to advance public policy that supports access to food and nutrition services for people with severe and/or chronic illnesses nationwide.

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