

HEALTH, LIFESTYLE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, NEWS

GLSS ADDRESSES FOOD INSECURITY

BY STEVE KRAUSE | March 3, 2021

LYNN — Greater Lynn Senior Services CEO Kathryn Burns hopes “Project Phoenix” will help Lynn residents who have been adversely affected by the year-long pandemic to rise up from COVID’s ashes.

The program is an outgrowth of the emergency fund set up by the late Vincent Lique and his wife, Kathy, 15 years ago to meet the needs of consumers — many of them who live on low, fixed incomes and struggle to make ends meet, Burns said.

“Project Phoenix” takes the mission a step further and enters the realm of food, health and nutrition counseling. It will even go as far as counseling people on food preparation to support those who may need it.

Burns says the need for such an all-encompassing “food security” service is vital in Lynn, as the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the city hard. Infection rates are three times higher than the state’s average, she said.

“If nothing else, the pandemic has made us all even more keenly aware of the social barriers and inequities that exist all around us,” she said.

When Burns became the chief executive officer last year, one of her goals was that “we really wanted to work hard at collaborating with as many community organizations as possible,” she said. “This is a community-wide collaboration. Our efforts are to address food security needs of all Lynn residents.”

There are 14 nonprofit organizations working on the project that is largely under the umbrella of the Food Security Task Force, which is under the direction of Norris Guscott, who works for the Lynn Public Health Department.

“We are collaborating with the task force,” Burns said. “What we’re hoping for is a one-stop environment to address food insecurity.”

She said GLSS is getting close to forging an agreement with Catholic Charities to provide a food pantry.

“But that’s not all it’ll be,” she said. “We’re anticipating farmers’ markets and other ways to get consumers connected with the food resources they need — education, cooking, nutrition, the right grocery stores, childhood nutrition, and the best way to cook and eat if you have a chronic illness.”

In addition, Element Care, another nonprofit that caters to those 55 and up, is on board to do counseling about housing and nutrition.

“Folks in both programs (GLSS and Element Care) are trying to work together to solve some of these problems,” Burns said. “We hope to offer in-person training.

“The whole idea,” Burns said, “is that food insecurity has become even more of an issue since the pandemic started. We hope that this will be a hub for a lot of resources for a lot of people.”

Burns is hopeful that the service can be run out of the first-floor space of the GLSS building on Silsbee Street, which is big enough, she said, to accommodate a pantry now that the Council on Aging has vacated the space.

Members of the task force collaborating for the project include the Salvation Army, My Brother’s Table, Lynn Public Schools, New Lynn Coalition, New American Center, GLSS, LEO, Inc., The Food Project, Lynn YMCA, Lynn Community Health Center, Mutual Aid Lynn, The Food Share Table and the North Shore Medical Center.



Steve Krause

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