

CHARITY, FOOD

# PHOENIX FOOD HUB PROGRAM MERGES MEALS AND MINDS IN LYNN

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BY JAMES BARTLETT | July 23, 2023

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LYNN – A new community nutrition program is looking to educate people on the relationship between diet and mental health.

According to a press release, the Food and Thought program, part of the Phoenix Food Hub initiative, aims to improve people’s mood and well-being with education on the connection between food and health.

“Our main focus is on education and counseling around a growing body of research that points to the critical connection between what we eat and how it impacts not only our physical health but our mental and emotional health, as well,” Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Certified Integrative Mental Health Provider Lynn O’Neal, who is leading the program, said in the release.

The Food and Thought program includes a monthly newsletter called “Food for Thought” that features signs and symptoms of mental health problems, as well as education and advice on how one’s diet can affect and improve mental health.

The program is funded by Beverly and Addison Gilbert Hospitals’ Community Benefits Community Grant Program and the Essex County Community Foundation Behavioral Health Partnership Grant.

Phoenix Food Hub was spearheaded by Greater Lynn Senior Services in 2022 with the goal of serving people of all ages with nutritional needs in and around Lynn.

Phoenix Food Hub's space in Greater Lynn Senior Services at 8 Silsbee St. includes a teaching kitchen, food pantry, food-delivery area, and even a data system linked to Lynn Community Health Center.

"Phoenix Food Hub is the one-stop hub that addresses the social and clinical determinants that are linked to food insecurity," Lynn Public Health Coordinator and Food Security Task Force Leader Norris Guscott told *The Item* in June.

The initiative also offers monthly caregiver cooking classes, nutrition counseling services, and healthy cooking demonstrations held by UMass Extension Nutrition Education.

The primary funder of the Phoenix Food Hub initiative is Mass General Brigham, which is providing a five-year, \$1.85 million community-health grant to the program. The initiative is also supported by nearly 20 nonprofits.