



SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

A New Beginning: How Your Support is Changing Lives Like Patti's

At Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa (LFCC), every meal served is more than just a plate of food – it's a chance for a new beginning.

Patti B. knows this firsthand. Married for 18 years and a devoted mother of four, Patti's world turned upside down when her marriage ended. Struggling to make ends meet, she

turned to LFCC for help and relied on the meals we provide to keep her family fed.

Four years ago, Patti became homeless – sleeping in cars and shelters, fighting every day just to survive. Her greatest heartbreak came when she lost custody of her youngest son, Ryan. Patti had truly hit rock bottom.

But thanks to supporters like you, Patti's story didn't end there.

With perseverance and the help of LFCC, Patti found hope again. She secured a spot in transitional housing at Delta Landing, where her physical and mental health began to heal. And when LFCC staff encouraged her to enroll in our Culinary Arts Training Program – a free, 12-week course that teaches essential skills for entry-level positions in the culinary industry – Patti eagerly embraced the opportunity.

Unfortunately, due to recent health challenges, Patti has had to step away from the program. But her determination remains strong – and once she has recovered, LFCC will be there to support her as she resumes her journey toward a brighter future. "Now is the time to focus on me," Patti says. "LFCC is family-oriented. They don't ask why you need help; they just make sure you're OK."

You can be the reason someone like Patti gets a second chance.

Your donation helps fund critical programs like the Culinary Arts Training Program – opening doors to stable employment, self-sufficiency, and renewed hope.



Donate Now

Together, we're not just serving meals – we're serving hope.

★ **MILESTONE
REACHED:** ★
**7 MILLION MEALS
SERVED SINCE 1983!**

Special Announcement

We are proud to share an incredible milestone in our journey to fight hunger in Contra Costa County.

Since Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa began in 1983, we have now served over 7 million meals to individuals and families in need throughout our community.

This achievement would not have been possible without your support, generosity, and commitment to helping your neighbors. In 2019, we celebrated reaching 5 million meals served.

In just a few short years, we've added another 2 million—reflecting both our expanding impact and the rising need in our community.

Every meal served is a reminder of what we can accomplish together.

As more of our neighbors struggle with food insecurity, inflation, and economic uncertainty, LFCC continues to respond with compassion, dignity, and urgency.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Let's keep the momentum going—because no one in Contra Costa County should go hungry.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Dear Friends,

We are writing today with a deep sense of concern and urgency.

Hunger is a policy choice—and recent decisions made by Congress and the White House are putting tens of thousands of families at risk. In a stunning move, federal leaders have chosen to gut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the most effective tool our nation has to fight hunger. These cuts will impact millions of Americans, including an estimated 25,000 households in the Bay Area alone.

Here in Contra Costa County, the impact is already being felt. SNAP—known as CalFresh in California—has long been a lifeline for low-income families, seniors, disabled adults, and workers who struggle to make ends meet. When that lifeline is slashed, the pressure shifts to nonprofits like Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa and our partners across the food system.

We are serving thousands of meals every day. And we know from experience: when federal benefits are cut, demand for our services spikes—often overnight. At the same time, we're also facing cuts to FEMA and TEFAP food distributions, which now come with unexpected costs and are eating up more than half of our annual food budget.

We are bracing for a perfect storm—more people in need, fewer resources to help them.

This is a pivotal moment. We must do everything in our power to ensure that state and local leaders protect and expand CalFresh and support a coordinated, community-based approach to addressing food insecurity.

We are committed to doing our part—and we need you with us. Whether it's through a donation, advocacy, or helping spread the word, your support ensures that no one in our community has to go hungry.



JANETTE KENNEDY
Executive Director,
Development and
External Relations



JOLEEN LAFAYETTE
Executive Director,
Operations



PARTNERSHIPS

ROOTED IN LOVE: The James Cooper Memorial Garden Feeds a Community

Just across the street from their home of 30 years in Martinez, longtime residents Bob and Bambi Barker have transformed a one-acre plot of land into something extraordinary: the James Cooper Memorial Garden, a thriving community garden dedicated to feeding neighbors in need through Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa.

Seven years ago, driven by a deep sense of community and love for their hometown, Bob and Bambi purchased the land with one goal in mind—to give back. They tiered the hillside, installed a watering system, and began planting. Today, the garden produces a vibrant variety of vegetables and fruits, including squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, corn, and jalapeños. A peach tree—grown by Bob from seed—stands as a quiet symbol of dedication and care. The garden also boasts grapevines and a kiwi plant they hope will bear fruit this year.

With help from Patti and Don of the Martinez Kiwanis Club and volunteers from Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa, this season's crops are now in the ground, promising another bountiful harvest to support local meal programs.

The garden's name is a tribute to a man who shaped Bob's life: James Cooper, a neighbor, mentor, and Marine who survived the brutal Battle of Bataan during WWII. Upon returning home, James founded a Boy Scout troop in Martinez. Bob, a proud member, credits James as a heroic figure who inspired him to give back. "He did so much for the kids in this town," Bob recalls. "I just wanted to honor his legacy."

For Bob, gardening is second nature—a lifelong passion passed down through generations. Both he and Bambi now channel that passion into their volunteer work at Loaves and Fishes, where they see firsthand the impact of their efforts.

"We just feel good knowing we can help," Bambi says. "This garden feeds more than just people's bodies—it brings people together, and it honors those who made our lives better."

Thanks to the generosity and heart of the Barkers and their community partners, the James Cooper Memorial Garden continues to grow—not just crops, but hope.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

Gail's Heartfelt Commitment Shines Bright

If you've ever called Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa on a Thursday, chances are you've heard Gail's friendly voice on the other end of the line. For many years, Gail has been a dedicated volunteer, answering phones, assisting clients, and offering a warm welcome to anyone who reaches out for help.

But Gail's commitment goes even deeper.

A lifelong volunteer, Gail first heard about Loaves and Fishes through a neighbor. She was looking for a local organization making a real impact—and knew she had found it in LFCC.

"I just felt it was a wonderful organization doing important work in the community," she shared.

She began volunteering in the Pittsburg kitchen—an ironic twist, as she didn't particularly enjoy cooking. Her first assignment? Chopping 50 pounds of potatoes each week. "When I got good at that job," she laughed, "they gave me even more potatoes!" Eventually, she graduated to chopping carrots, celery, and cabbage, always finding purpose and satisfaction in contributing to the meals that nourish so many.

During the pandemic, Gail shifted her role to answering phones in the office, where she continues to serve every Thursday. Her voice is often the first point of contact for someone in need, and her warmth and compassion make all the difference.

Beyond her time, Gail also gives generously. Most recently, she made a \$10,000 donation to help support LFCC's programs. "I donate to organizations where I know my money will directly impact people in need," she explained.

We're deeply grateful for Gail's unwavering support, her generous spirit, and the joy she brings to everything she does.

Her story is a beautiful reminder that every role—whether behind a kitchen counter or a phone line—can change lives.

Thank you, Gail, for being a cornerstone of our community.



EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITY:

New Partnership at the Antioch Dining Room

At Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa, our mission is to provide community-based food programs and partner services that focus on meeting basic needs. We are excited to share news that strengthens this commitment and expands the ways we serve those experiencing food insecurity and homelessness.

Starting Tuesday, July 15, SHARE Community's mobile shower and outreach program will join us at our Antioch Dining Room located at 403 W 6th Street. This partnership allows us to offer even more comprehensive support beyond our hot meal service, which we have proudly provided here for nearly 10 years, serving nutritious lunches Monday through Friday from 11:00 AM to 12:45 PM.

SHARE will provide free showers, hygiene kits, coffee, and outreach services every Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM, with medical and mental health care available through Contra Costa Health. Together, we are addressing multiple basic needs in one trusted space—helping our unhoused neighbors regain dignity, health, and hope.

This collaboration is a natural extension of our mission, reflecting our belief that food is just one vital part of nourishing the whole person. By partnering with SHARE and Contra Costa Health, we are strengthening our ability to meet the complex needs of the community we serve with Radical Hospitality®—welcoming every guest with respect, compassion, and care.

Thank you for your continued generosity, which makes partnerships like this possible. Because of your support, Loaves and Fishes can keep expanding our impact—feeding bodies, restoring spirits, and building community.



Loaves and Fishes

OF CONTRA COSTA

Nourishing Lives

835 Ferry Street, Martinez, CA 94553

Tax ID# 68-0018077

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

DONATE

Write a check or donate online at

www.loavesfishescc.org

We also accept food donations

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LOAVES AND FISHES OPERATED DINING ROOMS/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

ANTIOCH

American Legion Hall
403 W. 6th Street

MARTINEZ

Dining Room/
Admin Offices
835 Ferry Street

PITTSBURG

Central Kitchen
510 Garcia Ave, Unit H

PITTSBURG

St. Vincent de Paul
1415 Simpson Court

OAKLEY

Red Man-Pocahontas Hall
1403 Main Street

WALNUT CREEK

Trinity Center
1888 Trinity Ave.

SAVE THE DATES!

THE BIG LA BOCCE

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2025

10:30 AM - 2:00 PM

Martinez Bocce Federation
Joe DiMaggio Way, Martinez, CA

ALL IN AGAINST HUNGER

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2025

Join us for an unforgettable evening of high stakes for a higher purpose. The Charity Poker Tournament to benefit LFCC is coming your way!

CONCORD TURKEY TROT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2025

8:00am, Newhall Park
1351 Newhall Parkway Concord, CA
Presented by Diablo Valley Federal Credit Union to benefit LFCC.



Go to LFCC Website for more information. <https://loavesfishescc.org/events/upcoming-events/>

CULINARY ARTS TRAINING PROGRAM

Loaves and Fishes offers a 12-week free culinary program for individuals wanting to learn how to work in the culinary industry and are looking to work in the industry. Our program will teach you basic culinary skills needed to qualify as a candidate for a starting position within the Culinary Industry.

APPLY TODAY! Class size is limited

Go to: <https://loavesfishescc.org/culinary-arts-program/about-the-program>

info@loavesfishescc.org

