

Summer 2021

Update: Phoenix Food Hub

Thanks to the generous outpouring by many in response to our annual appeal this past fall and support from private foundations, Phoenix Food Hub is beginning to take shape at 8 Silsbee Street in Lynn. The project is unfolding as a consortium of agencies all with an interest in combatting the dire problem of food insecurity, exposed and made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. Working together with the Lynn Food Security Task Force (of which GLSS is a member), Phoenix Food Hub will

"We work with a lot of younger people living with disabilities who do not qualify for Meals on Wheels because of its age requirement, but need some help either due to financial issues, physical limitations, lack of access, or isolation. Phoenix Food Hub will be an important resource for many of our consumers moving forward."

Nicole Harnois, MPH RN CCM
North Region LTSS Program Manager

include a state-of-the-art food pantry; nutrition supports, like cooking classes and healthy diet counseling; health monitoring, exercise and other health management workshops; and benefits counseling and nutrition resources information. Consortium members include the City of Lynn and organizations such as Lynn Grows, Lynn Community Health Center, Leading through Empowering Opportunities (formerly Lynn Economic Opportunity), My Brother's Table, the New American Center, The Food Project and others, as well as Catholic Charities. A related program will include a housing advocate to help homeless people find permanent living situations they can afford.

"The goal is that Phoenix Food Hub will provide good, healthy food to people and families in need through the food pantry, but then be able to offer some critical 'add ons,' which can influence better health and well-being over the long term," says Valerie Parker Callahan, Director of Planning & Development at GLSS. To that end, you, our donors, generously gave \$26,000 in support of Phoenix Food Hub during last fall's annual appeal. This enabled

continued on page 3...



A Letter from GLSS CEO Kathryn Burns

During the past year, my e-mail signature has been the Italian phrase, "Andrà tutto bene!"—or "All will be well! (Eventually)." Perhaps we have actually reached some semblance of that "eventually." It is encouraging that local senior centers are re-opening, but it will not be an overnight return to a pre-pandemic "normal." A segment on our June episode

of GLSS TV (airing on local cable stations and at www.glss.net) discusses the fact that it will probably take some of us a little bit longer than others to return to our regular activities and routines. That is to be expected. Many are dealing with profound loss and the effects of long-term isolation.

Since beginning my tenure as GLSS' CEO last March, I have been reminded nearly every day about the impact that the kindness and caring of just one person can have on others. Multiplied several-fold, that impact is almost

continued on page 3...

GLSS Piloting Innovative Service to Keep People Connected

One result of the global pandemic and the long-term isolation felt by so many is the need to find innovative ways for people to stay connected. One such effort includes a new tool that GLSS is piloting called Uniper—a service that turns your television into a communication device through the use of a small camera connected to a box. In addition to a rich library of content, Uniper enables one-on-one communication with case managers, healthcare providers, counselors, and family and friends. “The COVID-19 pandemic pretty much destroyed the limited social connections that many older people or adults living with disabilities already experience,” says Kathryn C. Burns, GLSS’ CEO. “Research shows that isolation, particularly long-term isolation, has a very negative effect on people’s overall health, significantly contributing to premature death from all causes and increasing a person’s risk of diseases like dementia.”

Uniper allows an individual to connect with others through their TV screen. “This is really the primary reason we chose Uniper over the many other platforms we reviewed,” says Valerie Parker Callahan, Director of Planning and Development. “We view it first and foremost as a communications tool to help people better manage their health and well-being, with Uniper’s built-in programming as a secondary—but very helpful—add on to reduce social isolation and promote stronger connections with the wider community.” It is easy to use with a simple remote that allows people to quickly transition from

“Having Uniper available on my television is a welcome change from regular TV. The variety of videos on Uniper keeps me interested in learning new things. I especially enjoy the chair exercises!”

Theresa M., Uniper subscriber

Uniper back to regular television programming. Many older people may not own or be comfortable using a tablet or laptop; most, however, have televisions.

Uniper’s existing content includes access to hundreds of videos—travel, arts and culture, music, educational programs, as well as “live” programming that includes exercise and other classes, peer-led discussion groups, support groups, and more, which are available throughout the day and scheduled by Uniper. GLSS is developing its own content, which will be available to users through a separate channel, and is also working on developing some live programming, too. “We envision, for example, that our Wellness Pathways falls prevention and health self-management workshops will be offered over the Uniper platform, as well as group and individual counseling through our Mobile Mental Health and Family Caregiver Support programs in a private, HIPAA-compliant setting,” Parker Callahan states. This would be in addition to virtual case manager visits with GLSS consumers.

UniperCare is an Israeli-based company with a West Coast, U.S. hub. GLSS is its first Massachusetts-based customer. In addition to customers across the U.S., Uniper works with Jewish Federation of North America connecting Holocaust survivors, their descendants, and people of the Jewish faith with tailored supports and group meetings. Uniper offers content in English, Russian, and Spanish.

GLSS already has a number of consumers active on Uniper and is well on the way to reaching its goal of getting 100 people signed up for one year of free service. Support for this program has been generously supplied by the Administration for Community Living (the federal Office of Elder Affairs) and the Older Americans Act administered through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, as well as a grant from Beverly and Addison Gilbert Hospitals, operated by Beth Israel Lahey Health. 



WHAT CAN YOU DO ON UNIPER?

- ✓ Join live, interactive classes
- ✓ Meet new people
- ✓ Video call family and friends
- ✓ Receive visits from healthcare providers or GLSS staff from home
- ✓ Watch videos from a rich content library

**BE ACTIVE.
BE TOGETHER.
BE INDEPENDENT.**

UNIPER

If you would like more information about Uniper services, please contact Andrew Wallace at awallace@glss.net.

...Phoenix Food Hub, continued

GLSS to leverage the program to private foundations. The Tufts Foundation recently awarded Phoenix Food Hub a \$100,000 grant over a 2-year period. “But it all starts at the community level with donors who see the need first hand—grass-roots support is critical to our success,” Parker Callahan states.

Architects have been engaged to create plans for the first floor of 8 Silsbee Street that will house the food pantry, and GLSS has already begun providing meals to individuals in need who receive services through GLSS who fall outside of regular Meals on Wheels eligibility. “Many people don’t realize that GLSS serves a much broader population and service area than it used to,” Parker Callahan notes. These include the One Care program (offered in Essex County by Commonwealth Care Alliance) which provides Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Coordination to people age 21 to 64 who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, and NRLP—or the North Region LTSS Partnership—a Massachusetts Medicaid pilot program—providing LTSS Coordination to people as young as 3 years of age living in more than 60 communities across the North Shore and Merrimack Valley.

“This ‘Meals on Wheels’ style program, which is being funded by the City of Lynn, is allowing us to meet the continued need as people begin to get back on their feet,”

Parker Callahan says. “It is the first of many innovative programs we plan to run out of Phoenix Food Hub, which will make a real difference in people’s lives, thanks to so many supporters.” 🥑



Front entry of 8 Silsbee Street in downtown Lynn where Phoenix Food Hub programs and food pantry will be located. A redesign of the first floor space is underway.

...A Letter from Kathy Burns, continued

unlimited. During a year like no other, I have witnessed countless acts of selflessness among our staff to ensure the safety and security of our consumers.

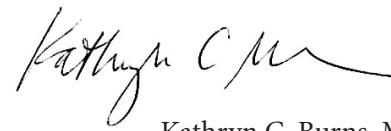
Our Meals on Wheels drivers and Nutrition staff took pride in contributing to our pandemic response, seamlessly meeting a nearly 20 percent increase in the need for home-delivered meals.

Case managers, who could not physically interact with their consumers, made extra phone calls, spoke with and comforted family members affected by the pandemic, and dropped off food and other supplies to ensure that everyone was safe and being well-cared for. This spring, when the Massachusetts vaccination site opened at Lynn Vocational Technical Institute, some of our nurses and staff volunteered on their days off to prepare shots and assist in many other ways. These are just a few examples. As always, GLSS made a difference in the lives of so many, and you—our stakeholders and donors—made a difference in ours,

reaching out to support our mission and consumers during an extraordinary year. Thank you.

There is no doubt that this global pandemic has presented many challenges. But it has also provided the opportunity for all of us to rethink and reimagine “normal;” to reach beyond our comfort zone; to offer a hand in a “virtual” way; to provide something as simple as a meal and realize its impact. These are the things that will define this time for me. And it has also resulted in innovation—some of our GLSS initiatives are featured in this newsletter.

So here’s hoping that “all will be well” soon enough. Thank you so much for your continued support of our agency. It has never meant more to us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn C. Burns' followed by 'MHA'.

Kathryn C. Burns, MHA

Two New Directors Fortify the Local Aging Network



Heidi Whear, Swampscott's new Director of Aging Services, and Kathy Burns, GLSS CEO.

On a recent morning, staff from GLSS visited the Swampscott Senior Center to find it bustling with activity. It was the center's first day of reopening to visitors since shutting down last spring, and staff were busy preparing for the day, which was expected to reach temperatures

over 90 degrees. In the midst of all this, the town's new Director of Aging Services, Heidi Whear, was able to take a few minutes to talk about the many ways she hopes to partner with GLSS, especially to get critical services like congregate meals operating again in the senior center and to take advantage of things like health monitoring and education, caregiver supports, and numerous other resources available to local senior centers through GLSS. Heidi brings a unique perspective to her new role. She is a Swampscott resident, co-chair of the Swampscott for All Ages Initiative, and a former GLSS employee (she served for several years as director of an adult day health program operated by GLSS).

Heidi's first order of business will be to hire a Senior Center Director and Outreach Worker. "Re-opening after the pandemic is giving us the chance to make a fresh start, in many ways, and to reimagine how we deliver programming and services to our senior residents," she said.

The challenges facing Swampscott and other cities and

towns across the Commonwealth after a year of closure are huge. Larger still is the one being tackled by Christopher Gomez, the City of Lynn's first Director of Elder Services, who is working on finding a space for and opening a new senior center in the city. In May, Kathy Burns, GLSS' CEO, talked with Chris on Lynn Community TV. "I am interested to learn from the city's senior population what they want in a new center," he said, but noted that he wants it to be a "one-stop" destination, offering many activities and services, such as hot lunches, a hair salon, exercise and educational classes, and games like Bingo and chess.

Gomez, who is bi-lingual and a native of Lynn, says his grandmother inspired him to choose elder services as a career. "I love the diversity of this city, and it is important to create a space where people of all backgrounds and interests can interact with their peers," Chris says. "This is especially needed after the isolation so many older people experienced this past year." 🌱



Kathy Burns talks with Chris Gomez, the new City of Lynn Director of Elder Services, on a recent Lynn Community Television segment.

Yes! I want to support critical programs for seniors and people of all ages living with disabilities.

Please accept my gift of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 Other: \$ _____

Enclosed is my **check** payable to *Greater Lynn Senior Services*

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

You can also give online at
www.glss.net/give

Thank you for your generosity!

GLSS

Greater Lynn Senior Services
8 Silsbee Street
Lynn, MA 01901