

APRIL 2023

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY IN ACTION

Grace Cooks: Good work, good food, good neighbors

Grace Cooks are back in the church kitchen after pandemic precautions kept them out for three years.

Once a month, the Grace Cooks prepare 40 meals for the residents of the Wright Inn, the Oak Park hotel repurposed by Housing Forward to provide interim housing for individuals and young families in need. Individually packed meals are delivered to the hotel kitchen to be enjoyed the next day.

The current chief cook is Doug Luce, with assistance from Sue and Charles Wells, who have been a part of this ministry for almost 20 years. In the early 2000s, Grace and a number of other neighborhood churches joined together to start caring for homeless neighbors, and for years Grace hosted 40 to 60 overnight guests every Wednesday from September through May. On the fourth Wednesday of every month, Grace volunteers cooked and served hot, nutritious dinners on the church's china, chaperoned the guests overnight, and gave them a good breakfast in the morning. The program then was called West Suburban PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) and operated in 20 communities. Volunteers often still call themselves PADS Cooks.

Today, PADS is known as Housing Forward. It has expanded its services to provide assistance to families with housing instability, housing for individuals with disabilities, and temporary shelter for the homeless. With the growth of Housing Forward, Grace Cooks



Salads with smiles. LEFT TO RIGHT: Belinda Bremner, Carole Barber, and Marianne Simpson serve up salads while Sarah Hunt keeps an eye on the stove.

have added the monthly preparation of 25 meals for the overnight shelter at St. Catherine – St. Lucy Church, at Austin and Washington Boulevards in Oak Park.

No matter who the Cooks are cooking for, every meal is prepared with loving care and fellowship.

► *New Cooks are always welcome. Please contact Doug Luce at jsluce@earthlink.net to learn more.*