



COMMON GROUND CAFE

I-S.M.I.L.E.™

Meal Program for Seniors



**2024
SPONSORSHIP
PACKET**

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Nancy Hillman, MSW
Founder/Executive Director

As I reflect on the past year with Common Ground Cafe, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable progress we have made in addressing food insecurity among seniors in Cleveland County, NC. What began as a negative and scary medical experience with my father last year has been beautifully transformed into a wonderful program that has blessed many seniors. Since launching the iSMILE Meal Delivery Program for Seniors in June 2023, our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to establish a productive system and expand our reach and impact.

Starting with just 18 seniors in two apartment complexes, we now deliver nutritious meals to 90 seniors across four senior apartment complexes and various homes throughout the county. This growth is a testament to our Cleveland County's unwavering support and the hard work of our board members, volunteers and partners.

Our mission to provide culturally sensitive meals tailored to the unique dietary needs of each senior has set us apart from other meal programs. We take great care in understanding the food preferences, allergies, dental issues, and medical conditions of our participants, ensuring that each meal is both nutritious and enjoyable.

This personalized approach not only addresses immediate hunger but also contributes to the overall health and well-being of the seniors we serve.

We owe our success to the favor of God, and to the generous support of our grantors. Resourceful Communities was the first organization to believe in the potential of the iSMILE Meal Program for Seniors, even when it was just an idea. Their initial support laid the foundation for our program. We are also deeply grateful to the Hospice Foundation, the Dover Foundation, the Albermarle Foundation, Two Kings Casino, and Albermarle Foundation whose contributions have been instrumental in bringing our vision to life and sustaining our efforts.

Our partnerships with Christ Covenant Ministries, Washington Outreach Ministries and Shelby Mission Camp have been invaluable, as our program would be impossible without the ability to have a safe and equipped kitchen to use as a home-base for our meal preparation. We are appreciative of your trust in us with the use of your church and facility.

Boiling Springs Community Garden, Foothills Farmers Market and Case Farms have been instrumental in providing fresh, locally-sourced food items that helped us provide nutritious meals to our wonderful seniors.

I would be remiss if I did not take the time to acknowledge our iSMILE team and volunteers that give of their time and skills faithfully each week to provide the excellent service our seniors have grown to love. Thank you Dena, Melody, Jericka, Sharon, Evelyn, JoAnn, Laura, Charlotte, Ebony, Edna, Rhonda, Lateefah, and Monique. We also appreciate Deborah, Debbie and Josephine, who were instrumental to helping us lay the foundation of this invaluable services to our seniors.

Thank you for your continued support and belief in our mission. Together, we can create a healthier, more equitable community for all.

Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities to expand our services and deepen our impact. We are committed to continuing our mission of serving the most vulnerable, underserved and marginalized members of our community and ensuring that no senior goes hungry.

In His Name and for His Glory,

Nancy



BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Karla E. Haynes, Executive Director of Cleveland County Community Development Corporation, is an accomplished management professional with over 30 years in the affordable housing industry. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Gardner Webb University. Ms. Haynes excels in building relationships and establishing partnerships locally and statewide. She has extensive knowledge of community economic development and affordable housing. Her favorite quote is "The time is always right, to do what is right." – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

**Ms. Karla Haynes,
Board President**

**Mrs. Melody McGuire,
Board Vice-Chair**



**Mrs. Jocelyn Christenbury,
Board Treasurer**

Rosalind L. White, a retired school social worker, holds a BA in Psychology from Winston-Salem State University, an MSW from Virginia Commonwealth University, and a pastoral degree from Rhema Bible Training Center. She ministers alongside her husband Leroy at Center Of Hope Training Ctr. in Shelby, NC. They have one daughter, Ashley. Rosalind co-owns Healing Health and Wellness and Love Tea and Soul Cafe. She founded the R.E.L.E.A.S.E Foundation Inc., empowering young girls and women. She enjoys reading, movies, and coffee with friends.

**Mrs. Rosalind White,
Board Secretary**



**COMMON
GROUND
CAFE**

**BOARD MEMBER
SPOTLIGHT Cont.**



**Mr. Dave White,
White Investments
of Shelby**



**Mrs. Linda Geter,
Cherokee County
Mental Health Center**



**Ms. Jackie Crawford,
Motherwize Cooking Channel**



COMMON GROUND CAFE OVERVIEW

HISTORY

Common Ground Café was established in March 2018 by Nancy Hillman and her late husband Robert. Their vision was modeled after the national community café restaurant model established by Denise Cerreta, founder and former president of the One World Everybody Eats nonprofit organization. For six years, the executive director, board members, and volunteers at Common Ground Café have built strong community relationships with local farmers, gardeners, restaurant owners, caterers, culinary artists, churches, and area businesses. Working with these partnerships, Common Ground Café can provide nutritious meals in a welcoming and safe environment, allowing participants to dine with dignity regardless of income, age, or status. Common Ground Café values education, provision, volunteerism, and community activism, all aimed at reducing food insecurity in our community. Our primary program prepares and delivers meals to marginalized and underserved seniors through the iSMILE Meal Delivery Program for Seniors.

VISION

To build a healthy and inclusive community by providing high quality meals primarily produced from local sources and served in a welcoming atmosphere where everyone eats with dignity, regardless of income, age, or status.

MISSION

Common Ground Café exists to strengthen our community, improve our economy, foster local partnerships, educate others, and address food insecurity by promoting health and offering nourishing meals in a welcoming and safe environment to everyone regardless of income, age, or status.

The **iSMILE Meal Delivery Program for Seniors** originated from a medical situation with Common Ground Café’s Executive Director’s 94-year-old father, Mr. Isaac (pictured on right). Thankfully Mr. Isaac recovered; however, his medical scare was the catalyst for Common Ground Café to develop a meal delivery program for underserved and marginalized seniors that would not only seek to provide hot nourishing meals, but also reduce food waste, decrease feelings of isolation, improve socialization and positively impact the community economics.

The iSMILE Meal Program for Seniors has two main objectives. (1) to address the health, social, economic, and environmental needs of those elderly citizens who are physically, cognitively, or emotionally unable to prepare or cook meals on their own, and whose income falls at or below the Federal Poverty Limit. And (2) to reduce isolation and create a sense of community by providing meals and social interaction to enhance the quality of life for our elders. There are also 5 Core Values that the program seeks to reflect in the service:



I-S.M.I.L.E™

Meal Program for Seniors

“Improving Socialization by providing Meals and Interaction to impact the Lives of our Elders”

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



The iSMILE Meal Delivery Program for Seniors began in June 2023 with 18 marginalized and underserved African American seniors, over the age of 70, below the federal poverty rate, and who were unable to consistently prepare meals on their own. The individuals were residents within two apartment complexes, with some participants unable to drive, physically unable to leave their home, and some without any family support.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



In June 2023 the program began with cooking and delivering weekly culturally-sensitive meals to 18 marginalized and underserved seniors within two senior apartment complexes in Cleveland County. In October 2023 the number of participants was increased to 64 and two delivery routes were added. Currently, the iSMILE program provides weekly meal deliveries to 90 seniors throughout Cleveland County, with 10 referrals waiting to be added to the program.

During the initial 3-month pilot service period of the iSMILE Meal Delivery Program in June 2023, priority for program entry was given to African American adults, ages 70 and above, who were at or below the Federal Poverty Level, and unable to consistently prepare or cook meals on their own. September 2023, the apartment manager advised there were several individuals in high need that were under 70 and/or identified with another ethnicity. For that reason, the age was lowered to 62 and we eliminated all racial considerations. As of August 2024, we serve 90 seniors in the program, and the demographics of the participants include African American, White, and Hispanic, ranging from age 64-94 with two of the participants classified as legally blind.

From June 2023 - July 2024, the iSMILE team members have prepared and delivered over 3400 meals to underserved and marginalized seniors

Each of the Lead Cooks are trained and certified with a Serv-Safe Manager Certificate to ensure that all safety and sanitation guidelines are met during the meal preparation and delivery process.

Approximately 200 pounds of produce has been donated from gardeners the Boiling Springs Community Garden, the Foothills Farmers Market and the Shelby Mission Camp (which results in an approximate food donation value of \$350)

From June 2023 - July 2024, volunteers provided approximately 1720 hours of service, which resulted in a savings of \$54,696 at a volunteer value rate of \$31.80/hour.

2023-2024 COMMUNITY PROGRAM SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS



CCM

Christ Covenant Ministries



FOOTHILLS
FARMERS'
MARKET

For 2023, 25% of the foods used were sourced from Cleveland County farms and local gardeners, including but not limited to: Bridges Produce, Berry Fields, Greene Family Farm, Costner Farm, Mardet Family Farm, and Trinity Family Farms



**Boiling Springs
Community Garden**



Shelby Mission Camp
North Carolina Baptists on Mission

*Washington Outreach
Ministry, Inc.*

Reverend Frances R. Webb
Executive Director of W.O.M.
lwebber14@carolina.rr.com

2023-2024 CORPORATE PROGRAM SUPPORTERS



CATAWBA



TWO KINGS
CASINO





If you can't
feed a hundred
people, then
just feed one.
Mother Teresa



The best way
to find
yourself is
to lose
yourself in
the service
of others"
-Mahatma Gandhi



We ♥ our Volunteers





In 2023, Common Ground Cafe began the year with an anticipated budget of \$25,000. We are grateful to report that our income exceeded expectations, totaling \$41,700, which enabled us to initiate the service of addressing food insecurity among seniors in Cleveland County through our iSMILE Meal Delivery Service for Seniors.

Our expenses for the year amounted to \$32,000, reflecting our commitment to fiscal responsibility and efficient resource management. The surplus of \$9,700 was used to further support and expand our iSMILE Senior Meal Program into the 2024 program year.

\$37,600 of the income received were from corporate grants: The Resourceful Communities (\$10,900), Hospice Foundation (\$5,000), Dover Foundation (\$5,700) and Albemarle Foundation (\$10,000) grants were restricted to the iSMILE Senior Meal Program. The remaining two grants from Catawba Two Kings Casino (\$5,000) and a second grant from Hospice Foundation (\$1,000) were unrestricted. Each of these grants played a crucial role in the development of a much needed service to deliver nutritious meals to seniors who are unable to prepare meals on their own and support the low overhead operational expenses.

In addition to the tremendous help received from the grants, our program success would not have been possible without the steadfast support of our board members, donors, volunteers, and community partners. Their generosity and commitment empower us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of seniors facing food insecurity, and we look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.



2023 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



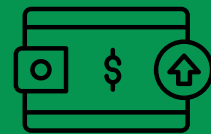
Revenue

\$41,700



Expenses

\$32,000



Surplus

\$9,700



Looking to the future, we aim to:

- Establish a commercial kitchen space to be used as a permanent location for Common Ground Cafe to adequately prepare meals and serve meals to the Cleveland County Community on a regular basis.
- Establish more partnerships to expand our meal delivery service to reach more marginalized seniors.
- Launch a cooking experience program for culinary students to gain practical experience while giving back to the community through one of Common Ground Cafe's meal programs.
- Secure a company vehicle to expand our services to the more underserved rural areas within Cleveland County.



CONTACT US



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