

THE STORY OF OUR DAILY BREAD

In the Beginning It was May of 1984 when Our Daily Bread (ODB) began serving meals in the back room of the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store on 14th Street, under the auspices of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Inspired by the vision of Dr. Claire Warhola, a member of the church, the meals were prepared in the church kitchen and carried over to ODB where 18-24 clients could be served at one time. Dr. Warhola's timeless determination energized the life of ODB for a decade and a half, until her retirement in May of 1999.

Organizing to meet expanding need: By the early 1990's it was clear the need for assistance in Manatee County exceeded all estimates. Several churches joined with Sacred Heart to provide financial support, food and volunteers for all weekend meals as well as volunteers for weekdays. The time had arrived to move from our "Mom and Pop" operation into an incorporated agency that could seek substantial new funding support and qualify as a tax-exempt agency for federal tax purposes. Our Daily Bread was incorporated in February 1992 as a tax-exempt 501© (3) organization, (FEI #65-0374954). The four founding churches were Sacred Heart, Christ Episcopal, Redeemer Lutheran and Hope Lutheran. ODB incorporation paper recognized the diocesan affiliation of each church: The Catholic Diocese of Venice, The Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida, The Florida-Georgia District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the Florida Synod of Evangelical Church of America.

Growing and Expanding: In 1994, ODB purchased the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store and renovated it to provide a larger serving area accommodating up to 40 clients at one serving. A new kitchen building was added in 1997 and connected to the existing building. Since 2009 we have been part of the One Stop Center at 701 17th Ave. W, the property includes the Community Coalition and eight other agencies providing services the homeless and needy of Manatee County.

Each and Every Day, a Hot Meal from 10:00-11:30: Seven days a week, including holidays, ODB provides a hot meal at midday. The Salvation Army provides the hungry with an evening sandwich or soup and a beverage. Without ODB, nutritional needs of hundreds of hungry people in our community would go unmet, creating substantial pressures on all the social service agencies, medical services and other organizations in our community.

Who Are Our Volunteers and what do they do? Over 300 volunteers drawn from 30 local churches help to prepare, cook and serve the meals. Others shop, solicit food, ask for donations, check supplies, keep records, and manage the small emergency clothes closet. Some are here once a month, others are here every day.

Who do we serve? Each day ODB serves 220 to 300 clients. Last year we served over 88,600 meals and gave out over 7,400 food bags. About 20% of clients are women and children. Of the adults, approximately one-third are Hispanic, one-third are Caucasian and one-third are African-American; ratios vary with the season.

Meeting the Cost and Operation: The annual budget for ODB will soon exceed \$200,000 as we meet the utilities costs, insurance, other operating costs and salaries for staff. All volunteer efforts that we can create cannot offset these real cost. After twenty five years, the challenges are undiminished.

A Better Home for All: Our goals continue to be service-orientated and helpful to those in need as they find ways to improve their lives. Our new Community Partnership Program will advance that mission. Please join us all as we work to together to make Manatee County a better home for all of our citizens. Recently the Community Coalition for Homelessness has formed a new group of volunteers called the Open Door Resource Center; at the new One Stop Center is a full service day center, providing restrooms, laundry, case management, employment services, dental and a medical clinic and other related agencies servicing the needy.