

The Community Kitchen Executive Director Announces Retirement Replacement Search Launched

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KEENE, NH – Phoebe Bray, Executive Director of The Community Kitchen for the past 10 years, has announced she will be retiring this summer and a search has been announced to seek her replacement.

“I am so proud of the organization’s achievements over the last decade and am equally excited about what is planned for the future,” Bray wrote in a letter that appears in the latest issue of The Community Kitchen’s newsletter, which has just been mailed to volunteers, donors and other supporters.

“But those plans will come to be under a new leadership,” Bray continued. “The Board of Directors has formed a search committee to find a replacement that includes Board members, and key and close partners of the organization. The organization plans to engage a consultant to facilitate the transition, work with the Kitchen through this period of change, help with the expansion of the Pantry Program and the staff requirements that will bring. I have every confidence in the Board and the staff that the mission will be fulfilled completely.”

Ellie Ryan, The Community Kitchen Board Chair, credited Bray with ably leading the organization during her tenure.

“Though we will miss her greatly, we are also very grateful that thanks to Phoebe’s leadership, The Community Kitchen is well positioned for the future,” Ryan said.

Bray has led The Community Kitchen through several significant accomplishments, including:

- Securing grant funding for and overseeing two major renovation projects to ensure The Community Kitchen can fulfill its mission at its 37 Mechanic Street location well into the future. The projects included installing new kitchen equipment and a conveyor belt, replacing all lighting with LED fixtures, upgrading the building’s food storage capacity and HVAC system, and installing 150 solar panels to help reduce monthly energy costs.
- Introducing a gleaning program that built relationships with local farmers and brought more than 400,000 pounds of fresh produce into The Community Kitchen’s Pantry and Hot Meals programs.
- Safely guiding The Community Kitchen through the COVID pandemic; pivoting to take-out hot meals and reduced contact grocery distribution. “We haven’t missed a hot meal or grocery distribution date and we’re all suitably proud of that,” Bray said.
- Beginning the planning process for a Mobile Food Pantry that will allow The Community Kitchen to expand its reach to underserved rural areas. “We get calls every week from people who can’t make it into Keene, but are in need of groceries,” Bray said. “A Mobile Food Pantry program will allow us to serve seniors, families and other area residents we are not currently able to reach.”
- Advocating for the food insecure in the Monadnock region by collaborating with other social service agencies, area municipalities, donors and non-profits to help eliminate hunger in the area. “People needing a food pantry often feel they don’t have a voice,” Bray said. “Part of our role is to not only provide our clients with food, but also help them access other programs and services.”

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About [The Community Kitchen](http://TheCommunityKitchen.org):

Founded in 1983, The Community Kitchen’s mission is to provide healthy and nutritious hot meals, take-home food boxes and advocacy to low and moderate income men, women and families with children in the Monadnock Region.

Since its founding, The Community Kitchen has provided more than 11 million meals and served as a crucial food source for thousands of Monadnock Region residents in need. It relies on dedicated volunteers and generous donations to meet its mission. Support comes from local restaurants, businesses, Monadnock United Way, municipalities and Cheshire County, as well as state and federal grants.

In total, Keene-based residents account for about 55 percent of The Community Kitchen’s clientele. About 95 percent of Kitchen clients come in not for hot meals, but for boxes filled with groceries – including fresh produce gleaned from surrounding farms when possible.

Long-standing relationships with area donors like C&S Wholesale Grocers, United Natural Foods and the New Hampshire and Vermont Food Banks mean that residents from other communities know they can pick up 30 to 40 pounds of nutritious food staples in one visit if they make the drive to Keene.