



Project Open Hand
meals with love

Project Open Hand and the California Food Is Medicine Coalition Announce New Hires to Expand Healthcare Partnerships in the Bay Area

San Francisco, CA – October 17, 2019 - Project Open Hand (openhand.org), the leading nutrition services provider in the Bay Area, and the California Food is Medicine Coalition (calfimc.org) are pleased to announce the addition of two program directors to drive the expansion of healthcare partnerships that will provide medically tailored nutrition interventions.

L. Ann Thrupp is joining the team as Director of California Food is Medicine Coalition. She will be responsible for leading the Coalition’s advocacy efforts, advancing awareness and understanding of evidence-based medically tailored nutrition and the development of strategic pilot projects of the Coalition.

Serena Ngo has been named Director of Statewide Initiatives for CalFIMC. She will work with CalFIMC partner agencies, public and private health plans, and healthcare providers to advance access to medically tailored nutrition for special populations in targeted geographical areas across the state.

Paul Hepfer, chief executive officer of Project Open Hand stated, “With the guidance and support of our new CalFIMC program directors, we anticipate accelerating advocacy and outreach for medical nutrition interventions, sharing the tremendous health benefits for the patient and measurable savings in healthcare costs for the provider.”

Thrupp has extensive experience as a pioneer and leader in sustainable and regenerative food systems and food justice for over 25 years, and has worked in the non-profit, business, and government sectors. She served as the founding Executive Director of the Berkeley Food Institute (BFI) at the University of California Berkeley which develops and fosters food systems transformation through interdisciplinary research, education, policy initiatives, community engagement, and empowerment of emerging leaders. Thrupp has extensive experience in sustainable and organic agriculture and food systems, in the United States and internationally. She has held leadership positions in non-profit organizations, government, academia, and as a practitioner and educator in sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and environmental/food justice.

Thrupp has a PhD and MA from Sussex University (with Marshall and Fullbright Scholarships) and a BA in Human Biology and Latin American Studies from Stanford University (Phi Beta Kappa) and is fluent in Spanish. She has written over 70 publications and served on a Scientific Advisory Committee of the CA Department of Food and Agriculture, and on two committees of the National Academy of Science.

Ngo most recently served as the Director of the Wellness Program San Francisco for Project Open Hand which included oversight of over \$2 million in contracts, implementation of new service models and research studies, and program evaluation. Ngo has nearly 15 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, which includes work in capacity building services, behavioral health, community development, food security and affordable housing. She has previously led statewide efforts to convening cross-sector stakeholders to develop quality standards for expanded learning programs within public and affordable housing for the state of California. She honed her focus/interest on nutrition and food security after graduate school and was the lead contributor in developing a youth service learning program around healthy hunger relief. The program has been presented at various conferences and published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Ngo has a BA in Political Science and a Masters of Social Welfare, both from UCLA.

"The Coalition is thrilled to see the growth of the "Food is Medicine," medically-tailored nutrition movement across the country and in California," said Richard Ayoub, chair of CalFIMC and CEO of Project Angel Food in Los Angeles, CA. "Having Ann and Serena join this work will go a long way toward increasingly availability of nutrition services to clients in need throughout the state."

CalFIMC (calfimc.org) is comprised of six community-based non-profit organizations -- Ceres Community Project (Marin/Sonoma Counties); Food for Thought (Sonoma County); The Health Trust (Santa Clara County); Mama's Kitchen (San Diego County); Project Angel Food (Los Angeles County); and Project Open Hand (Alameda/San Francisco Counties.) The Coalition advances a national movement to employ medically tailored nutrition and food interventions to improve health outcomes, decrease hospitalizations, and impact healthcare costs.

Funded through California Senate Bill (SB) 97, the three-year, \$6 million dollar California "Food Is Medicine" Pilot Program targets Medi-Cal (Medicaid) patients who suffer from ongoing congestive heart failure and provide medically tailored meals and a nutrition intervention for 12 weeks to reduce healthcare utilization. During the Medically Tailored Meal Intervention, a registered dietitian administers a CalFIMC-approved nutrition education curriculum, in-home, virtual, and telephonic nutrition education, wellness checks, and an assessment of program participants. First year observations align with the goal of using food and nutrition therapy to improve the health of low-income Californians living with chronic illnesses, and heart failure, in particular. The California Food is Medicine Coalition is funded, in part, by Archstone Foundation and Gilead Sciences, Inc.

ABOUT PROJECT OPEN HAND (POH) Founded in 1985, Project Open Hand's mission is to improve health outcomes and quality of life by providing nutritious meals to the sick and vulnerable, caring for and educating our community. What began as a grassroots response to the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco, today POH is an innovative, outcome-driven, client-centered partner in the public health and medical arenas. A leader in the "Food is Medicine" movement in California and nationwide, POH prepares 2,500 medically tailored nutritious meals daily and provides 200 bags of healthy groceries to help sustain clients in San Francisco and Oakland. Project Open Hand employs a staff of 125, relies on the support of nearly 125 volunteers every day and is headquartered in San Francisco's Tenderloin with a second location in Oakland, CA. To learn more or refer patients, visit calfimc.org.