



The Open Door
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The Open Door Honors Locals and Kicks Off Holiday Giving at Autumn Breakfast



From left: Gloucester Mayor Greg Verga, Helen Muise Award recipient and volunteer Tony Gross, Helen Muise Award recipient and volunteer Grace Hamada, State Sen. Bruce Tarr, and The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine.

(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)

GLOUCESTER –The giving season officially began this morning at The Open Door Autumn Breakfast.

From 7:30-9 a.m., approximately 200 people gathered at the Beauport Hotel on Commercial Street to honor The Open Door Autumn Breakfast award winners, and kickstart the nonprofit's Holiday Basket and Thanksgiving Food Drive programs.

"It is simple and practical acts of service or kindness right where we are that make the biggest difference. Now coming into the months when we celebrate and give thanks, there are families in our community who are struggling to make ends meet," President and CEO Julie LaFontaine said. "Your support is needed. With rising energy costs and grocery bills climbing, people will need help to set the table for the holidays."

Last year, The Open Door distributed 2,267 Holiday Baskets for Thanksgiving and the winter holidays to local people.

To donate to The Open Door Holiday Basket program and beyond, visit FOODPANTRY.org/donate.

The Open Door Board of Directors Co-Chair Chris Barker also spoke at the event, reflecting on the impact of the pandemic. Autumn Breakfast has been a virtual event for the past two years due to the pandemic.

"We recognize that we would not have been able to meet the demands for food assistance without the support of all of you and our volunteers," Barker said. "Today is a day to celebrate those exceptional volunteers, the ones who generate all of that good will that surrounds us when we come to events for The Open Door."

Awardees recognized at the event include:

- **Outstanding Community Partner: Ipswich Family YMCA** for their dedication through the pandemic and beyond. To watch a video about the Ipswich YMCA and their support of The Open Door, [click here](#).
- **Charlotte Pope Award: Marc Nicastro**, of Gloucester, for rolling up his sleeves in the kitchen. To watch a video about Nicastro's dedication to volunteering at The Open Door, [click here](#).
- **Helen Muise Award: Tony Gross**, of Gloucester, for his versatility and willingness to do what needs to get done. To watch a video of Gross's commitment to serving the community, [click here](#).
- **Helen Muise Award: Grace Hamada**, of Gloucester, for her kind heart and commitment to Second Glance, Thrift Store of The Open Door. To watch a video highlighting Hamada's role in building community at Second Glance, [click here](#).

Autumn Breakfast also kicks off The Open Door Thanksgiving Food Drive program. This year, The Open Door is encouraging donations of breakfast and brunch items including:

- Cereal
- Coffee
- Tea
- Cereal Bars

- Granola Bars
- Instant Oatmeal
- Pancake/Waffle Mix
- Maple Syrup
- 100% Juice

To hold a food drive at your place of work, school, place of worship, or other community group, visit [FOODPANTRY.org/fooddrive](https://www.foodpantry.org/fooddrive).

The community-wide Thanksgiving Food Drive, held every year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, is on November 19 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at participating locations including:

- Market Basket at 101 Gloucester Crossing Road, Gloucester MA 01930
- Stop & Shop at 6 Thatcher Road, Gloucester MA 01930
- Shaw's at 127 Eastern Avenue, Gloucester MA 01930
- Shaw's at 146 High Street, Ipswich MA 01938
- Crosby's Marketplace at 3 Summer Street, Manchester-by-the-Sea MA 01944
- Market Basket at 231 Newburyport Turnpike, Rowley MA 01969

Participants are asked to please avoid donating anything in glass jars for safety.

To learn more about how you can help local people get the food they need, visit [FOODPANTRY.org](https://www.foodpantry.org)

About The Open Door

The mission of The Open Door is to alleviate the impact of hunger in our community. We use practical strategies to connect people to good food, to advocate on behalf of those in need, and to engage others in the work of building food security.

Founded in 1978, The Open Door is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit and community food resource center for low-income residents of Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex, Ipswich, Hamilton, Boxford, Rowley, Topsfield, and Wenham. **In 2021, The Open Door helped stabilize the lives and health of 8,516 people from 4,176 households through the distribution of 1.83 million pounds of food.**

For more information, visit [FOODPANTRY.org](https://www.foodpantry.org).

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From left: Ipswich Family YMCA Board of Directors Chair Paul Sacksman, Director Terese Barous, and The Open Door President and CEO Julie LaFontaine.

(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



From left: The Open Door Director of Operations Jen Perry, volunteer Tony Gross, and President and CEO Julie LaFontaine.

(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



From left: The Open Door Director of Thrift Operations Susan Zwart, volunteer Grace Hamada, and President and CEO Julie LaFontaine.

(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)



The Open Door Board of Directors Co-Chair Chris Barker.

(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)