



The Open Door  
Julie LaFontaine, President and CEO  
28 Emerson Ave.,  
Gloucester, MA 01930

Media Contact: Kelsey Richards  
Email: [kelsey.richards@foodpantry.org](mailto:kelsey.richards@foodpantry.org)  
Phone: 978-283-6776 x 226

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **The Open Door Unveils Game-Changer Building Project on Emerson Avenue**



*President and CEO Julie LaFontaine leads a community ribbon-cutting, involving the whole crowd, at Saturday's ceremony at The Open Door.*

*(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)*

**GLOUCESTER**— Hundreds of Cape Anners gathered at The Open Door on Saturday for a ribbon-cutting unveiling its new Food and Nutrition Center.

“We built this project, together. The Food and Nutrition Center wouldn’t have been possible without the community here on the North Shore,” President and CEO Julie LaFontaine said. “It strengthens and expands the safety net for groceries, meals, nutrition, and more for our neighbors.”

Those in attendance included Sen. Bruce Tarr, Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante, and Gloucester Mayor Greg Verga.

“The amazing thing about The Open Door is the fact that it has constantly evolved to meet the needs of the community. Today is another example of that, as this new, incredible place opens,” Sen. Bruce Tarr said. “There’s a lot more stuff beyond kitchen appliances in there, there’s a community that cares. There’s a group of people at The Open Door that give us a chance to help our neighbors. There’s spirit that’s always uplifting, and always fulfilling.”

“Today, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for all of the people you feed, for all of the people that you make feel special,” Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante said. “And thank you for the foresight to take it one step farther and realizing nutrition, not just food, but nutrition is a basic building block of who we are and what we can do.”

The project includes a larger, modernized commercial kitchen with a double line, fulfillment center, food packing space, additional dry and cold storage for more food rescue, client meeting spaces, and more. As a result of the project, the nonprofit can sustainably continue to meet the need for food resources in the community, **including a 28% increase in visits to its food pantries in 2023 over 2022.**

“I just want to thank all the volunteers, all the employees, everything you do every day for this organization,” Gloucester Mayor Greg Verga said. “COVID really shined a light on the need for it and today with inflation, there’s still a long way to go.”

**In the kitchen, the team is now preparing 3,000 meals each week**, up from around 1,000 pre-pandemic.

Those in attendance joined in a community ribbon-cutting, where long strands of orange ribbon were threaded through the crowd, and everyone invited to cut the ribbon with their individual pair of scissors. Community members were also asked to bring dirt from their homes to help plant two trees, to symbolize the role the community made to bring the Food and Nutrition Center into reality.

After the ceremony, an open house was held at The Open Door, and members of the public toured the new space and learned more about The Open Door programs from staff. Food samples were provided by the kitchen and nutrition team.

### **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 non profit and community food resource center for low-income residents of Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex, Ipswich, Hamilton, Boxford, Rowley, Topsfield, and Wenham. In 2022, The Open Door helped stabilize the lives and health of 8,486 people from 4,872 households through the distribution of 1.78 million pounds of food.

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

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*Gloucester Mayor Greg Verga, center, smiles as he waves orange ribbon, along with his wife Kellie, on left, and to his right former Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken and Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante.*

*(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)*



*Orange ribbon was woven through the crowd for a collective, community ribbon-cutting on Saturday for The Open Door's new Food and Nutrition Center. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)*



*From left: Sen. Bruce Tarr, former Gloucester Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, Rep. Ann-Margaret Ferrante, and Gloucester Mayor Greg Verga help plant a community tree at The Open Door's ribbon-cutting on Saturday. (Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)*



*President and CEO Julie LaFontaine (left) waving a piece of orange ribbon after the ribbon-cutting.*

*(Photo Courtesy of The Open Door)*