

Mission Moment

I was recently reading a book by Gregory Boyle and his words aligned perfectly with the visible kinship I saw displayed when I attended the Gratitude Feast at Rising Strong the Tuesday before Thanksgiving.

*“...the measure of our compassion with what Martin Luther King calls ‘the last, the least and the lost’ lies less in our service to those on the margins and more in our willingness to see ourselves in kinship with them. It speaks of the kinship so mutually rich that even the dividing line of service provider/service recipient is erased. **We are sent to the margins NOT to make a difference but so that the folks on the margins will make us different.**”*

As I witnessed staff and residents alike dining together—sharing delicious food—it was evident that there was no ‘us vs. ‘them’—but truly a shared experience of community, connection, gratitude and appreciation. All enjoyed the festive foods while children gobbled mac & cheese, rolls and other delectable dishes. One family shared that they had no extended family to visit over the Thanksgiving holiday and were so thankful for this meal. Similar statements of thanks were conveyed, and staff were able to share their culinary talents, family recipes, and turkey (and ham!) carving skills—it was incredibly heartwarming!

On the eve of Thanksgiving, when so many households don’t have healthy connections for celebration, staff and residents came together as one community. Looking out over the dining room at Rising Strong I was reminded why I do this work every day...this work changes who we are and affirms our mission to Feed the Hungry, Heal the Hurting and Welcome the Stranger. We do this through our Core Values and along the way we find our commonality & kinship (while maintaining boundaries!) and most importantly—in the words of our CEO—we are reminded that LOVE ALWAYS WINS.

Thank you all for sharing in this mission-driven work!

With much gratitude,
Sharon Stadelman
Chief Crisis & Shelter Officer