About the Agency

The Amherst Survival Center started as an exchange for clothing, a meal and conversation. Forty years later, it offers a range of services open to everyone, all free of roof, provided by a staff of two full-time and nine part-time people, and 225-plus volunteers every even.

The organization’s current strategic direction is to engage the community to reduce the effects of food insecurity in local neighborhoods. Its commitment echoes the original mission to create an environment where people can move beyond a condition of need, and where everyone can share resources, information, concerts, experiences and expertise.

The Center fosters and celebrates a community where we accept, support and rely upon one another. With the exception of the Food Pantry, the mission-driven programs are open to anyone who comes to the Center. The Pantry is limited to residents of 13 surrounding towns.

Programs include: a community meals program (daily lunch and weekly supervised meals served by volunteer) a food pantry, which includes a special program for families of school-age children; the available fresh personal care items including children’s diapers and pet food; a mobile food program; a senior mobile program; a fresh produce/baked goods daily distribution; a food recovery team (volunteers who go out and pick up donations of food from supermarkets, businesses and farms every morning the Center is open); a free mobile medical service (with clinic doctors, nurses and household items); a free walk-in health clinic (operated by medical volunteers); a job search assistance program, and a cluster of community programs (field trips, music programs and weekly movies).

The Center also hosts community partners. Examples include the Food Bank of Western MA offering help applying for SNAP, Health Care for Homeless offering help getting health insurance and Eliot Homeless Services for food causing management.

The volunteer program is open to all and many volunteers have also at one time or another participated. Though most of the 6,000 visitors a year are housed but struggling with making ends meet and food security, some visitors are experiencing homelessness.

For these individuals, the Center offers a private shower, a free self-service laundry facility and private lockers. They can also receive a modified Food Pantry distribution.

Today as a whole and individual participants are men and women of all ages, from across Hampshire and Franklin counties, individuals and families, immigrants, students, employed and unemployed, housed and experiencing homelessness—all of whom are struggling with food security.

Executive Director

Mindy Domb has been executive director of the Amherst Survival Center since May 2013. In her four years at the Center, she has helped to maintain and expand community programs in the Center’s new building. Before this time, the Center has also become more involved with advocacy activities, expanding its social media presence, seeking out new funding, increased volunteer and advisory board participation.

Prior to this position, her experiences were in public health, government, community coalitions and development. In these positions, she worked to address the needs of underserved communities and individuals in crisis, build the skills of the health and human service workers who assist and support these individuals, and develop collaborative programs to address social determinants of health and personal change. She has been a congressional aide in New York City, an HIV/AIDS activist and community organizer and trainer. Domb has completed graduate coursework in adult learning at Teachers College and has a bachelor’s degree from Barnard College.

Thriving in Springfield thanks to Lopez

Maysol Lopez has always time to listen to the kids who want to talk.

“Seeing the kids every day and talking to them about their day, and helping them with what they are working on—from school and in the clubs brings me great pride in what I do,” said Lopez. The Membership Coordinator for the Boys & Girls Club Family Center in Springfield. “There are a group of five to seven kids that come to see me throughout the week just to talk. They tell me about any problems they are facing from other kids being mean to them, to working on school projects or even a project here at the Club. They bring in something they can trust and come to, just to be someone they have to talk to.”

Lopez, who has worked in human services for more than 22 years, is passionate in her work. She enjoys helping those who can’t fully take care of themselves and also educating the community. Lopez strives to give people a sense of independence when they are in a place where they are not able completely to do so on their own.

At the Boys & Girls Club Family Center, Lopez also enjoys assisting families in caring for their children while urban communities, helping people at a time when they are searching for a job or going back to school.

In her time as the Membership Coordinator at the Boys & Girls Club Family Center, Lopez has been instrumental in increasing the attendance of youth served in our Pre-School and After-School Programming, as well as the organization’s Evening Teen Programs.

Because of her hard work and dedication, BGCCP programs are at capacity on every level. It is a true testament to Lopez’s dedication to families, youth, the local community and especially the Boys & Girls Club Family Center, said Executive Director Keshawn Dodds.

“We are truly lucky to have her in our community and on our staff,” Dodds added. “With Ms. Lopez in our family, we know that the Boys & Girls Club Family Center will continue to grow through the years.”

Caring Force

Laura is helping people find their way

Laura, a Positive Prevention Peer Navigator with Victory Programs’ Mobile Prevention Team, has a wide range of tools to choose from to reach the people who need him most. Whether it’s his bright personality, being able to connect with people in Spanish or English, or just listening to their story and giving people hope, he is truly someone that people can trust and come to, just to be someone they have to talk to.”

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