

Laying a Path to the Future:

Martha's Table Strategic Plan 2007

Why Now?

Our young people in the District of Columbia struggle with many challenges on the streets, at home and at school. Poverty has risen, especially among children, with one out of three living with its burdens. The problem of hunger in our community is persistent and even growing. Fifty-seven percent of children in the District are born to single-parent families.

The multiple problems of our community's children and families have to be addressed together. Focusing on one or two problems is unlikely to provide adequate support for children and families to deal successfully with the many challenges they face. Since its founding in 1980, Martha's Table has sought to provide a range of services to help at-risk children, youth, families and individuals to improve their lives.

Three main areas of service address these needs: (1) providing day-care and out-of-school learning and recreational programs, before and after school and all day during the summer, for approximately 300 at-risk children ages three months to 18 years; (2) providing meals 365 days a year to the homeless at numerous sites throughout the city via McKenna's Wagon, our mobile soup kitchen, as well as meals for seniors and the daily availability of food at our building on 14th Street; and (3) offering family support services to our constituents, including a clothing distribution center, parent education and information and referrals about other community and government services.

Although the need for the transformative work of Martha's Table continues, important changes have occurred in the five years since our last Strategic Plan. Internally, we have completed our leadership succession, grown our programs and enhanced the capacity of our infrastructure. Externally, our immediate neighborhood is undergoing a dramatic transition, including an influx of affluent residents and stores. With many additional residential and retail projects in process nearby, most notably the condominium/retail development across 14th Street from us, this trend will continue. These rapidly evolving circumstances affect our clients and our services and raise many questions about how Martha's Table should approach the future.

Given these changes for Martha's Table and the neighborhood, we believe this was an especially important time to step back and review and strategically develop our plans for the future in a structured process. We wanted to develop a shared vision to guide us through these dynamic and exciting times.

The Process

We began the strategic planning process in mid-2006. From the outset we were determined to make this a transparent and interactive process that would draw upon the insight and experience of many different people. We included staff members and Board members, as well as people from outside Martha's Table. The Planning and Priorities Committee, which oversaw the process, included three staff members in addition to six Board members.

The first step we took in the process was to revisit our Mission and Vision Statements. After many discussions with Board and staff, the Board adopted the following statements:

Our Mission

To help at-risk children, youth, families and individuals in our community improve their lives by providing educational programs, food, clothing, and enrichment opportunities.

Our Vision

- We will be a beacon of hope and a safe place for those who need help and those who seek to help others.
- We will provide the tools and opportunities to the children, youth, families and individuals of our community that will enable them to reach their potential in society.
- No one should go hungry, and we will reach out to our community with food 365 days a year.
- We will strive to serve as a model of effective service to the community.

While we were still refining the Mission and Vision Statements, we held a two day facilitated retreat with the senior staff and the Board. This proved to be an exciting and educational forum to exchange information, ideas, and dreams.

Out of that discussion, and a number of follow-up meetings, the PPC established a framework for the Strategic Plan. First, given our rapidly changing environment, we decided that the Plan should cover the next 3-5 years. Second, with input from the entire Board and senior staff, the PPC drafted seven Strategic Priorities for Martha's Table that would provide the backbone of the Plan:

Strategic Priorities

1. Develop effective programs that link organization strengths with needs and opportunities in the community.
2. Enhance relationships with our clients and our community and identify and develop partnership opportunities.
3. Sustain and enhance a robust reciprocal relationship with volunteers.
4. Assure a high quality of work life where employees can achieve their highest professional potential and work most effectively to carry out the mission of Martha's Table.
5. Build and maintain strong administrative, financial and technological systems to enhance programs and efficient operations.
6. Strengthen and diversify sustainable base for financial and in-kind resources.
7. Determine best use and location of facilities for programs and resource maximization.

The PPC then established a Task Force for each of the Strategic Priorities. The Task Forces included Board members, staff members of different levels, and experts from outside Martha's Table. The Task Forces then met several times and developed Goals around their respective Strategic Priority. Those Goals have been reviewed and edited by the PPC and compiled in this document. The Task Forces and the PPC also identified various measures to implement the goals, and these are summarized below.

The Strategic Plan

In formulating this plan we strove to develop a vision for the next three to five years. We felt it was important to deal with some significant immediate questions and some longer-term ones. Because of the need to maintain our momentum, some of the work and aspirations described below have already begun. Some are enhancements and some are new directions. Below is our vision for the future:

I. Develop effective programs that link the strengths of Martha's Table with the needs and opportunities in the community.

Goal A. Be a model program for serving children, youth and families by achieving accreditation by the National After School Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children through the intensification of efforts to provide educational and recreational programs of excellent quality designed with emphasis on the whole person.

Goal B. Grow educational programs by developing the capacity to provide in-school programming, developing the capacity to train youth workers and exploring underserved communities that would like us to work with them, with an emphasis on the District.

Goal C. Develop a master plan for the food distribution program in order to enhance coordination of the food program with other service providers to meet changing needs of the community and to improve the quality of the food served.

Goal D. Promote wellness awareness and activities throughout all programs, including nutrition, and serve food of excellent nutritional quality to the children.

Goal E. Explore opportunities for Martha's Outfitters to leverage donations to fulfill our mission of serving the poor and generating revenues to fund our programs.

II. Enhance relationships with our clients and our community and identify and develop partnership opportunities.

Goal A. Work with partners to identify schools, communities, and other non-profits, with an emphasis on the District, that want to collaborate with us to bring children, youth and family services of Martha's Table to their organizations or neighborhoods. Continue to work with partners to further strengthen the children, youth and family programs at our current 14th Street location.

Goal B. Partner with other non-profits who provide direct services to make our food part of their services, especially focusing on aligning our homeless food services so that people accessing our food can access other services as well.

Goal C. Expand Martha's Outfitters higher quality products by partnering with more retail stores as merchandise donors and explore creating additional points of service, especially through our partnerships with other service providers.

III. Sustain and enhance a robust reciprocal relationship with volunteers.

Goal A. Work to strengthen volunteer experience in all of Martha's Table programs by providing productive and engaging work experiences that are meaningful to the volunteer and that encourage enhanced volunteer support throughout all aspects of the organization.

Goal B. Develop a more engaging, in-depth and educational orientation and training experience for volunteers.

Goal C. Continue to analyze volunteer needs and opportunities throughout the organization and focus volunteer recruitment to meet those needs.

Goal D. Develop sustaining relationships with all volunteers to maximize their overall contributions to Martha's Table.

IV. Assure a high quality of work life where employees can achieve their highest professional potential and work most effectively to carry out the mission of Martha's Table.

Goal A. Ensure that salary and benefits for all employees are fair and competitive, taking into account pay for performance, flexibility, living wage standards and other relevant criteria.

Goal B. Promote a work environment where employees across the organization are respected and valued and where their rights and responsibilities are clearly stated.

Goal C. Continue to develop communication programs that provide information among departments and throughout the organization.

Goal D. Encourage and facilitate career and professional development programs for employees that are mutually beneficial for the employee's and the organization's growth.

V. Build and maintain strong administrative, financial and technological systems to enhance programs and efficient operations.

Goal A. Further develop and invest in an appropriate internal financial infrastructure to support planning, delivery and oversight of Martha's Table's programming. This includes, but is not limited to staffing, systems and policies.

Goal B. Continue to develop and retain the appropriate number of staff with the appropriate competencies to ensure a strong infrastructure and powerful programming.

Goal C. Determine what information Martha's Table has and needs for its programs and administration and develop systems to collect, manage and disseminate that information.

Goal D. Make necessary, ongoing investments in our physical and technological infrastructure to ensure quality and efficient operations. Identify and plan for investment required to achieve this goal now and in the future.

Goal E. Review and define the critical core competencies and diversity goals necessary to maximize the effectiveness of the Martha's Table Board and committee structure. Ensure that these goals and underlying strategies are consistent with the long-term strategic plan of Martha's Table and are responsive to the internal and external factors influencing the organization.

VI. Strengthen and diversify sustainable base for financial and in-kind resources.

Goal A. Develop 3-5 year financial multi-source fundraising plan for Martha's Table that reflects program and facilities growth over time.

Goal B. Create integrated development strategy including more robust use of the database that would include in-kind and financial donations and volunteer data.

Goal C. Develop and train staff and Board to maximize fundraising and communications throughout Washington community to enhance reputation of the institution and increase gifts.

VII. Determine best use and location of facilities for programs and resource maximization.

Goal A. Move immediately to ensure that overall facility is able to support programs of high quality with an initial emphasis on accreditation.

Goal B. Create a plan for developing the current site on 14th street as the home base for Martha's Table, maximizing its asset value and fully utilizing its size, space and location.

Goal C. Incorporate environmentally sustainable practices in planning and implementing building renovations and develop and promote awareness of these practices in our programs.

Approved by the Board of Directors
July 24, 2007