



**Bowling for Angels will benefit Project Angel Food-** the only, free meal-delivery program that serves men, women and children debilitated by life-threatening illnesses throughout Los Angeles County. Every day Project Angel Food cooks and delivers more than 1,300 meals to citizens in need throughout our community.

## History

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In **1989** a group of concerned individuals came together to address a problem: their friends, struggling against a range of serious illnesses, were literally starving for lack of nutritious meals. Starting with just 15 clients a day, the need for meal deliveries immediately increased and in **1990** we moved into the kitchen of the Crescent Heights United Methodist Church. In **1991**, due to the dramatic growth in AIDS cases, Project Angel Food's mission focused to serve the HIV/AIDS community. In **1994**, we moved into our current rented kitchen on Sunset Boulevard and our first delivery van was donated. During **1995** our delivery area continued to expand via drop-off centers throughout the County, and nutritional guidance became a foundation of our program. Our once-a-week frozen-meal delivery option was introduced in **1998** to allow greater flexibility for the people we serve. In **2004**, after a six-month pilot-program, we returned to our original mission to serve those debilitated by all life-threatening illnesses such as cancer, diabetes and Parkinson's, among many others. That same year, we introduced our "Breakfast Bag" program, bringing a second meal to those who need it most. The year **2006** will proved to be a momentous one in our history, with the purchase of 922 Vine Street, which thanks to an expanded kitchen, will enable us to greatly increase our meal-deliveries to those in need throughout Los Angeles County.



Project Angel Food has delivered more than four million meals to more than ten thousand people, a testament to our ability to successfully implement, sustain and expand our home-delivered meal program over the past eighteen years. Since our earliest days, our services have been driven by a particular sense of urgency because hunger and illness do not wait.

## Overview and Current Programs

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Project Angel Food begins with the people we serve. We maintain active partnerships with diverse organizations that serve men, women and children struggling with serious illnesses who would benefit from nutritious, freshly-cooked meals.

A phone call is all it takes for someone to become a Project Angel Food client. If the situation is dire, a meal can be delivered within 24 hours. Most often, service begins within a week as documents, coordinated by our **client services** department, confirming the diagnosis of a life-threatening illness and an inability to access nutritious meals, are completed. As part of this in-

take process, a Project Angel Food registered **dietician** works with the client and his/her medical team to ensure that our meals will fully address their health needs. In addition to our main meal, each day we cook at least three alternate meals that address specific medical issues. Client Services staff members continually speak with clients to learn about hospital stays,



visiting family, improved health or any change that may result in a permanent or temporary stop in our meal-deliveries.

We are currently enrolling 80 new people in our program each month. Their information is shared with the dispatch department and, naturally, the kitchen staff. The **dispatch** department creates and coordinates our routes throughout Los Angeles County to ensure efficient and timely deliveries. They work with volunteer drivers, part-time paid drivers, and full-time paid drivers. Paid staff members both deliver meals directly to the homes of the people we serve and meet volunteer drivers, at drop-off locations throughout the County, who then fan out and deliver anywhere from 5-12 meals. We deliver meals Sunday through Friday, with a second meal delivered on Friday for Saturday.

As new individuals become part of Project Angel Food, the **kitchen** staff reads their nutritional profile provided by the Nutrition department and determines the meals each client will require for the coming week. Food purchase orders are adjusted accordingly. Due to limited storage space, we receive food deliveries every day. Thanks to a devoted corps of volunteers, we are able to provide freshly-cooked meals with minimal paid staff. A typical kitchen day begins at 8 a.m. with one group of volunteers packaging the day's breakfast bags, another group packaging the dessert cooked yesterday afternoon, and a third group finishing the side salad, much of which was also cooked the prior afternoon. A fourth group cooks the main entrée for that day's delivery. Starting around 11 a.m., "the line" is created, whereby the components of the main meal are gathered and packaged. See sample menus at the end of this page. The lid on each hot meal has "Love" written by a volunteer so that the people we serve are reminded of the friendship and love that created their meal. In the afternoon, another group of volunteers arrives to cook dessert for the following day, prepare ingredients for the next day's side dishes, and begin preparing the next day's main entrée. A staff member oversees each day's alternate meals, supported by volunteers as well.

The **volunteer services** department plays an integral role at Project Angel Food by recruiting, training and supporting volunteers to work in the kitchen, deliver meals and assist at our fundraising events. On average, we have 35 volunteers working in the kitchen each day and 40 volunteers delivering meals. We maintain a roster of 1,500 active volunteers who range in age from 14 to 88 years. They are high school and college students, working professionals on "volunteer days," retired professionals, housewives, designees from the courts, actors and actresses and many others. We also have ongoing relationships with various groups, such as the Goodwill, Lanterman High School, Easter Seals and Vista Social and Work Service that work with people with mental and physical disabilities. Project Angel Food is a community center where people from all neighborhoods in all stages of life come together for the shared purpose of caring for those in need.

The work of Project Angel Food is supported by a **fundraising and special events department**, a **human resources manager**, a **finance department** and our **director's office**.

## The People We Serve

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With dignity and kindness, Project Angel Food will serve anyone in Los Angeles County who struggles with a life-threatening illness and does not have ongoing access to nutritious meals. Sixty-four percent are people of color (within that, 23% are African American and 34% are Latino) Each month we welcome more women than men as new clients; currently 26% of the people we serve are women. Our clients represent the diversity of Los Angeles and range in



age from 7 to 104 years. They struggle with myriad illnesses and many have multiple diagnoses. In 2006 Project Angel Food delivered 445,947 meals to 2,010 clients, representing an 8% increase from 2005 and a 16% increase from 2004.

*One client, Marianne, was a Project Angel Food volunteer when she was stricken with debilitating multiple sclerosis. Joint pain and hand numbness prevent her from cooking. Marianne speaks eloquently of how quickly life can turn: she was a long-time volunteer driver and then one morning the*

*multiple sclerosis “hit her like a Mack Truck.” She never envisioned that she would need Project Angel Food meal deliveries herself. Another client, Clifford, suffers from neuropathy and is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. The chemotherapy has caused a bleeding disorder which further prohibits Clifford from being able to grocery shop and cook.*

While many people turn to Project Angel Food for nourishment and comfort during their final days, many others experience weight gain and improved health, enabling them to “graduate” from our program.

### The Halo Effect of Project Angel Food

In addition to the very tangible benefits that Project Angel Food provides – good food, improved health, weight gain, and efficacy of medications – our client surveys reveal that Project Angel Food also helps many people avoid homelessness. The majority of the people we serve (86%) report living on less than \$1,000 a month, in Los Angeles County one of the most expensive urban centers in the country. This level of vulnerability creates unimaginable choices between rent, food and medicines, since many of our clients can rarely afford all three. By providing our clients with their primary meal, and for many their breakfast as well, their remaining funds can be stretched further to cover housing and medication costs. The spiraling problems that would be created if Project Angel Food's clients became homeless are tremendous. It is significant that the individuals we serve – people struggling with illness further burdened by food insecurity – retain the autonomy and dignity of remaining in their residences.

Additionally, for many of the people we serve, the Project Angel Food delivery person is their only source of human interaction in a day or week. This connection can be vital to the safety and health of our isolated clients. During the in-take process we secure pertinent contact

information, such as doctors and social workers, and our delivery people report any worrisome developments so that the appropriate parties can be contacted. Knowing the isolation many of our clients face, we recognize their birthdays with the delivery of a birthday bag brimming with utilitarian items and special treats and celebrate key holidays, such as Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas, with candy, gift baskets or flowers. Many clients tearfully report our gifts were the only ones received on these special days.



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