

Downtown Hotel Hospitality Extends to ARCH

By Julie Solomon

"Looks like it's gonna be another Alka-Seltzer night", said one gentleman holding a tray loaded with dinner. He makes this comment as he marvels over the baked ziti, spinach with olive oil, fresh breads, and an assortment of delectable desserts. This is not your average soup kitchen meal. The Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) kitchen manager, Cathy Franklin, prepared this meal, and delicious ones of the same high quality, each night for the 100 men who stay there. 30-45% of these men are on the case management program at ARCH and the rest of the diners/lodgers wait in a lottery for the remaining spots. As partners with Capital Area Food Bank, the full time cook and two part time cooks at ARCH creatively concoct a hearty meal each night. This past week, however, in honor of Homeless Awareness Week, the Austin Hotel and Lodging Association teamed up to fund and serve meals at ARCH all week.



Six downtown area hotels volunteered their staff and money in support of the Austin homeless community. Participating hotels included: Embassy Suites, DoubleTree Hotel, Hyatt Regency, Holiday Inn Town Lake, Omni Hotel Southpark, and The Driskell Hotel. Gene McMenamin, general manager of the Omni and President of the Austin Hotel and Lodging Association, said that the downtown hotel community wants to show

that they are not partial to just the patrons of their hotels. He went on to stress that they are aware of the social issues of downtown and want to be a part of the solution. Among those dishing out the meal were both general managers and various hotel staff. All hotel staff treated those dining at ARCH with the same courtesies and respect they would give the guests of their respective hotels.

As the ARCH kitchen bustled with hoteliers this past week, Cathy Franklin distributed surveys to the diners to ask about their requests for this week. Despite requests of Sushi, Thai, and other cuisines lacking the traditional American tastes, Franklin will attend to the majority of patrons who want a traditional Thanksgiving meal. Cathy and her staff are planning for a home-style Thanksgiving feast for their usual capacity of a hundred guys at the ARCH.



The community has reached out and stepped up for Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week and seems to be ready to help out for the upcoming holiday season as well.