

Anything
is
possible

It always seems impossible
until it's done.

Nelson Mandela

Spring 2022

Dear Friends ~ It seems as though the weather is making it somewhat impossible to welcome spring. Yes, we've had a few unseasonably warm days but, as I write this letter tonight, the rain is making plinking sounds as the drops dance against my windows. And it's kind of chilly. And it's, well, chilly.

Still, the forsythia is blooming and the dogwood trees are showing signs of pink and pearly petals. So, spring isn't impossible. Sometimes things take a little more time but they do get done.

Some things like this letter. I've written several versions of this letter but I didn't think any of them were any good or worthy of your time.

The thing is this: April 2, 2022 was my 14th anniversary at People to People. I've been writing these letters for 14 years. Every time I sit down to write one of these letters, I try to make the work of PtoP very real to you. You see, the work of PtoP is very real to me but I never in a million years imagined that I would be heading into my 15th year here. So, I've written more than 50 letters to PtoP's friends over the years and I'm having a hard time coming up with something new to say about what we do. How many ways can you say "help us feed the hungry."

Nelson Mandela said "It always seems impossible until it's done." Well, I'm not done.

Over the past 14 years, PtoP has truly done the impossible.

First came the Great Recession of 2008 which was called the most severe economic and financial meltdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In 2008, PtoP was providing food assistance to about 500 households a month. By July 2009, the number of households hit 1,000 per month. I'd been at PtoP for less than two years and, honestly, I was scared. But we did the impossible. We never turned anyone away. If someone came to us for food, PtoP provided food.

Then came Hurricane Sandy in 2011. PtoP's HVAC situated on the roof blew over during the storm and the gas line to the unit snapped. When the gas and power came back on, the roof caught on fire. PtoP's food pantry was unscathed, thank heavens, but the offices sustained significant damage. We had no heat, no computers and had giant fans throughout the building to deal with the water damage. Not only did PtoP continue to serve our clients, we were asked to serve as Rockland County's emergency food distribution site to assist the thousands of people without power, water and ready-to-eat meals. When PtoP is asked to step up, we say yes.

For several years after Hurricane Sandy, there were cuts to all safety net programs. Expenses continued to increase while salaries did not and more people were struggling to make ends meet. PtoP was there for Rocklanders who needed help in putting food on their tables.

~ over, please ~

Then came the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 continuing repercussions. Also in 2021 - the vaccine. Halleluiah!

As we kicked off 2022, we all thought that, just maybe, we'd be able to breathe a little, regroup, catch up on the day to day stuff necessary to run an organization when it doesn't have to handle crisis after crisis.

Something wasn't right, though. In the first few months of 2022, more struggling households came to PtoP for food than in the same months in 2021.

What was happening? We've heard (over and over again) about supply chain disruptions, decreases in production due to workforce shortages, etc. etc.

What's happening is inflation. Now, I'm not an economist nor am I going to get on a soapbox to rant about astronomical corporate profits when wage increases remain infinitesimal. Right now, the experts put the rate of inflation at 8.54% and they say that the last time we've experienced inflation rates like this was in the 1970s. Folks that were hanging on by their fingernails after COVID and were just feeling a little hopeful in 2021 are feeling a little hopeless right about now.

Thus the increase in the number of people coming to People to People for help in putting food on their tables. In the first quarter of 2021, PtoP provided food to 11,093 people. In the first quarter of 2022, the number of people requiring food assistance was 12,194.

Just when you thought it was safe to move into your 15th year at PtoP....

Gotta be honest with you. I was hoping we could kind of coast through 2022. You know, focus on long-delayed renovations, implement new programs, improve community outreach efforts. Now we're seeing that more people need to access our primary program - the PtoP Food Pantry - than last year. So it seems that we'll be completely focused on the basics - feed people.

So, onward we go. As many of you know, a letter from me would not be complete without a quote from Winston Churchill. Churchill said that "it is the courage to continue that counts." PtoP's board, staff and volunteers have the courage to continue. I'm hoping that you and all of PtoP's champions will continue to have the courage to support us financially. Without funds, we can't fulfill our mission which is to feed Rockland's hungry.

Yes, the COVID crisis is over and the issue of hunger is no longer on the front page of every newspaper. I'll tell you where you can see that the issue of hunger continues to impact many of your neighbors - at the front door of the PtoP food pantry.

Feeding Rockland's hungry isn't going to get easier any time soon. But it's got to get done. I'm hoping you'll help us do that.

With all my heart.

Diane Senatore

CEO

People to People
121 West Nyack Road, Nanuet, NY 10954
www.peopletopeopleinc.org

