

Bluffton Community Soup Kitchen Launches Summer Fundraiser “Providing Hope and Dignity”

Bluffton Community Soup Kitchen (BCSK) is launching “**Providing Hope and Dignity**”, it's community-wide end-of-summer fundraiser beginning in September. Constance Martin-Witter, BCSK's Executive Director, is hopeful and excited about the opportunity for local individuals, churches, communities and businesses to support its hot meal and food pantry programs. “We have seen our programs really take off during the last several years from 12,000 hot meals served in 2020 to 36,000 hot meals served last year.

Constance added, “The growth in the population we serve in Beaufort and Jasper counties, combined with the remarkable inflation in food has put tremendous pressure on the cost of food we purchase. We currently have a \$50-55,000 shortfall in our food and supplies budget for this calendar year. We know there are generous individuals, churches and businesses who will help support us in our mission to serve the underserved,”

Bluffton Community Soup Kitchen was established in 2011 by Ms. Ida Martin. Constance is Ms. Ida's daughter and has dedicated her retirement years to continuing the legacy her mother started, to prepare home cooked, hot meals for the elderly, sick, shut-in, homeless and impoverished members of our community. There was something special about Ms. Ida Martin, a woman who just couldn't stand to do nothing. Her heart and passion for the community gained national attention in 2011 when she was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal, one of the highest civilian honors in the United States. In a speech, President Barack Obama spoke about Ms. Martin saying, “In 1987, a single mom and her child—her children—moved in across the street from Ida Martin. Ida saw their refrigerator was empty, except for a bottle of water, so she brought them groceries. And I guess once she got started, she couldn't stop”.

When Ms. Ida saw a need, she filled it. She was a dreamer and a doer, a visionary and a missionary in her own town of Bluffton, with ideas as big as her heart. Her goal: Do something to make someone else's life better. Her mission wasn't just to help people, but to help them help themselves. She believed that education is important to stop the cycle of always needing and always being on aid or some kind of assistance. It is an opportunity for people to change their lifestyle and help their families. It's not surprising that her legacy lives on through her daughter, Constance Martin-Witter, who serves on the board of Bluffton Self Help and Meals on Wheels and is an active member of Campbell Chapel AME Church. Bluffton Community Soup Kitchen is based out of Campbell Chapel Church at 25 Boundary Street.

As the program grew and due to very limited local public transportation, a delivery program was started early on for clients unable to come to the center for lunch. Clients may receive a hot meal home delivered on Monday and Wednesday or come to the center for a To-Go meal every Monday and Wednesday at 1:00 PM. Clients will find an outdoor Food Pantry on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays beginning at 1:00 PM, At the end of our first year in 2011, Miss Ida delivered and served 500 home cooked hot meals. In 2014, a walk/in pantry of

non-perishable, fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, desserts, and assorted breads was started every Monday. In 2016, the organization started preparing weekly hot meals for families participating with Family Promise of Bluffton. By the end of 2020 BCSK delivered and offered To-Go, 12,000 home cooked hot meals. In 2022, 35,000 total hot meals were prepared, cooked, and delivered. BCSK's program grew to over 36,000 meals served during the 2023 calendar year. This is in addition to the many thousands of meals supported by our Kitchen Food Pantry program and conducted three days per week, year-round, except the weeks of Christmas and New Year.

A clear reflection of her mom, Constance Martin-Witter is a dreamer and doer. She and others in her community are doing big things, and they want to empower you to be part of it too through your financial support and/or volunteering to help out in BCSK's food programs. To help BCSK in "**Providing Hope and Dignity**", visit our website at <https://blufftoneats.org>, or call Constance at 843-707-6785 or email at constance@blufftoncommunitykitchen.org.



Bluffton Community Soup Kitchen

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