

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

## *Free meal volunteer group reaches out to AIDS patients*

**By Ann-Marie WongSam**

AIDS can be a devastating disease, but workers at God's Love We Deliver, Inc. (GLWD) are trying to make a difference to homebound AIDS patients who lack the strength to even fix their own meals.

A volunteer outreach group, GLWD has recently expanded its routes and is now delivering to AIDS patients in the Morningside Heights, Harlem, Inwood and Washington Heights areas.

The organization, founded by Ganga Stone and Jane Ellen Best, began delivering free homecooked meals to AIDS patients in the summer of 1985.

Gradually GLWD expanded and in August 1987, the group was able to open its own kitchen



in space donated by the West Park Presbyterian Church at 86th St. and Amersterdam Ave.

Operating out of the basement, GLWD prepares and delivers free meals to some 85 "clients" every weekday, according to Dee Mollo, GLWD's volunteer coordinator. Mollo said that while GLWD has over 100 clients on their files, the delivery routes change every day as clients enter and leave the hospital.

GLWD, Mollo said, is the only organization to provide this service in New York City. Even City Meal on Wheels charges \$5 per meal, she said.

GLWD currently serves all of Manhattan and is considering expansion to the Bronx and Brooklyn, according to GLWD's Business Manager Michael Bertish.

Luli Gray, one of GLWD's three chefs, said that they serve a four course meal which includes a soup, salad, entree, and dessert. She said that the clients have often lost so much weight they need the food GLWD serves. One meal can total 6,000 calories, she said.

"A lot of love goes into the richness and variety of the foods we serve," Mollo said.

"A lot of people we serve are in their last stages [of AIDS]. They get nostalgic for the foods of their youth. We need to make really nutritious meals and something they want to eat. Soup kitchen meals are not always palatable," she added.

Margot Gallant, GLWD's Kitchen Coordinator, said that GLWD also prepares special meals for patients who have certain dietary restrictions. She said that some foods react negatively with certain medications a client may be taking, causing him or her to become nauseous.

According to Mollo, GLWD is urgently seeking volunteers. She said that GLWD



began a van route on March 14 in Morningside Heights, Harlem, and several other uptown neighborhoods.

“The Columbia University area is our newest van route. We need volunteers to deliver meals there and to work in the kitchens.”

Mollo said that while the need for volunteers in the kitchen was top priority, volunteers for the office, for meal delivery, and for fundraising were also needed.

GLWD is funded mainly by private donations, Mollo said. Several thousand dollars were raised, she said, by placing blue collection cans in bars and restaurants around the city. She said that GLWD has been very lucky in receiving donations like a microwave oven from Bloomingdale's. “When you need something, it comes. We're blessed,” Mollo said.

Volunteers say they feel they are making a difference in the lives of the AIDS clients and that gives them a good feeling about themselves.

Kevin Daly, CC '79, who volunteers in the kitchen, said that working at GLWD has given him a better perspective on death and dying. “There is a general sense that AIDS has become a big numbers game and losing [a quality of] humanness. I wanted to feel a more human sense of what's happening.” Daly said.

Daly said that when he has done delivery work, the clients always seem very cheerful. “What struck me is they all seem very happy. I can get so depressed about the disease myself.”

Garth Cowan, a volunteer who delivers food by foot said that he stops and talks to the clients to “provide a little company.” “They don't see faces for a stretch,” Cowan said.

“They say that the food's good and that the food that [GLWD] supplies is as important as the medicine they take,” Cowan said.

Cowan said that he has seen firsthand the toll AIDS takes on human lives. “Of the people I visited last September four are now



ple I visited last September, four are now dead.”

But Cowan said that he has seen some clients recover. “One has been up and about and can do his own cooking and one has gone back to work.”

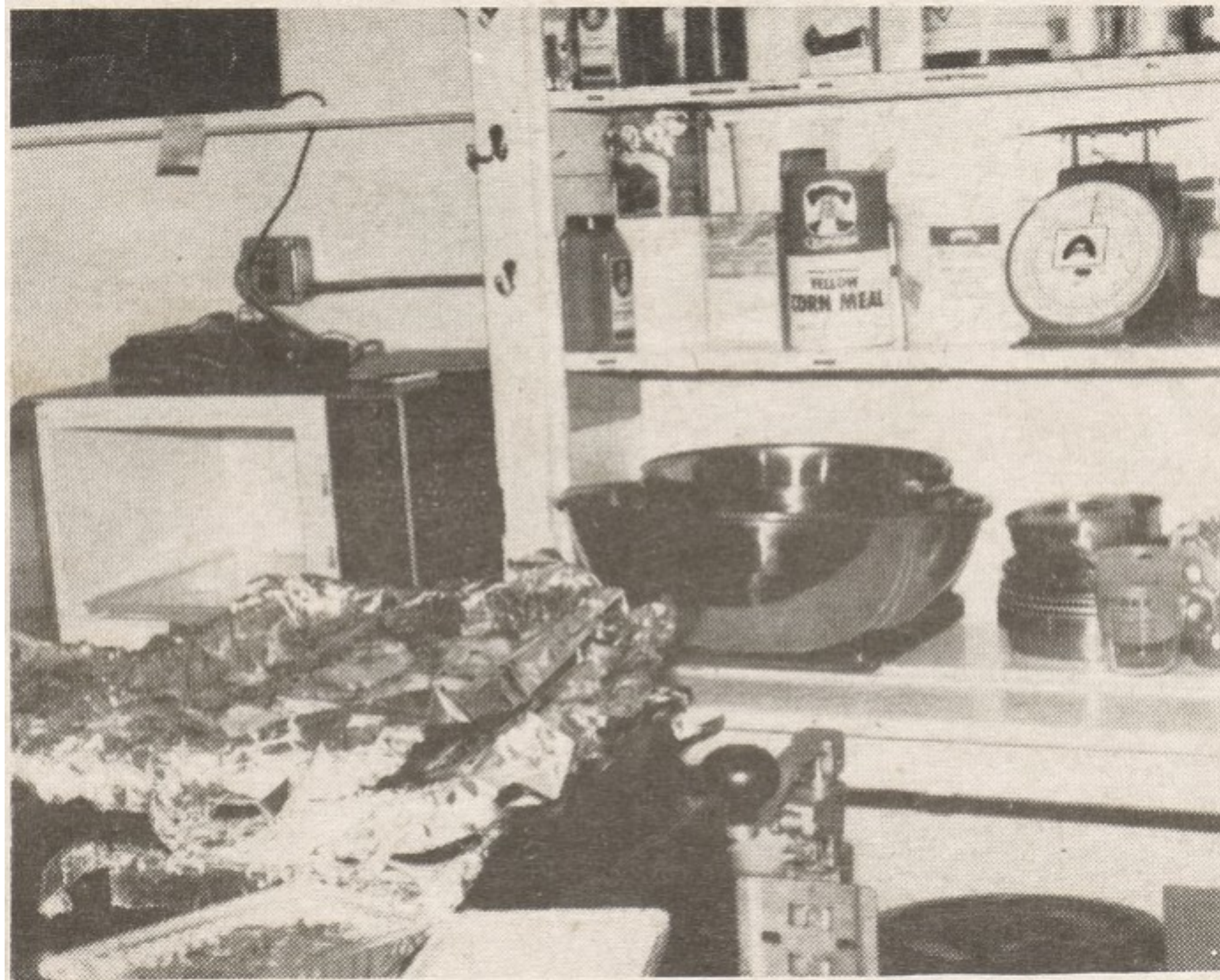
Gallant said that in cases where the client has just gotten out of the hospital, GLWD’s food program can mean the difference between recovery and continuing decline. “We get people on the borderline that are not truly homebound but are just out of the hospital.” Gallant said that a few weeks of GLWD’s cooking enables the client to recover and “get up and around.”

Corrine Ziman, a volunteer who works in the kitchen said that she volunteers because she feels there is a great need for the service. “It means a great deal to those who are homebound: I don’t really know anybody with AIDS but my daughter does. It’s just that it is so devastating.”

Stone, the executive director and co-founder of GLWD, said she hoped college students would work to help alleviate the AIDS crisis.

“We want to say that what the Vietnam War was to the previous generation, a rallying point, the War on AIDS could be for this generation. The War on AIDS is an opportunity for students to make a valuable contribution, so when your kids ask you where you were you can say, ‘I was feeding people.’ You’re really making a profound difference [by volunteering],” Stone said.





SPECTATOR/DANA GILETTE

**MEALS ON WHEELS:** God's Love We Deliver, a group that brings bedridden AIDS patients food has recently expanded its program to include the Columbia area.