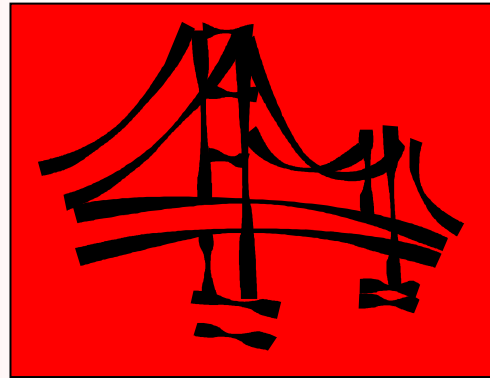


BUILDING BRIDGES



THE CONRAD CENTER

Providing nourishment for the body, the mind and the spirit.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Theo Woodson has been Program Director for The Conrad Center for four years. Each day he stands behind the serving line, managing a staff of four and countless volunteers that prepare and serve more than 350 meals each day.

Nine years ago Theo was involved with the program, but not as an employee. He was on the other side of the serving line as a guest. He relied on The Meals Program, its original name, for most of his meals because of his substance abuse.

At his worst, Theo was living under the bridge near the old location of The Meals Program at 302 West Canal Street. As the weather turned colder, he started volunteering for the program as a way to avoid the harsh weather. At about the same time, a regular volunteer, Charley Conrad, from Southminster Presbyterian Church took an interest in Theo and asked him what his name was. "Squirrel" he replied, telling Mr. Conrad the name he was known by on the street. Mr. Conrad asked for his birth given name and from that day on would not let anyone call him anything other than Theo in his presence.

This one gesture had a profound effect on Theo. He realized that if this gentleman had enough respect for him to ask his real name, then maybe he should show the same respect for himself. It was the first step in his recovery.

Today, Theo is in his eighth year of recovery. He voted for the first time in the 2004 elections after having his rights restored. During the past eight years, he has reunited with his grown children and been involved in their lives. His proudest moment came this past spring as he witnessed his youngest child graduate from the University of Virginia.

We lost Charley Conrad to cancer in 2002, but his spirit and willingness to help others is carried on by his wife, Jane. Mrs. Conrad continues to volunteer at The Conrad Center with her church group and serves on the Freedom House Board of Directors. Theo Woodson also carries Mr. Conrad's spirit everyday by helping others overcome the crisis of homelessness and addiction through his work at Freedom House.

Charley Conrad had a profound effect on Theo's future that began with a simple act of respect. Theo practices this approach everyday with others that are in crisis. He is proof that someone can go from living *under a bridge* to helping others *build bridges*.

FACTS

- ◆ Served the first meal in June 1983 from a house on West Grace Street
- ◆ Began serving breakfast in August 2000
- ◆ Only regular breakfast and dinner program offered in the city
- ◆ Served 87,584 meals in 2005 (10,000 meal increase since 2003)
- ◆ More than 76 faith-based organizations assist with preparation and serving the meals annually
- ◆ Provide breakfast and dinner, as well as bagged lunches for people working in labor pools, Monday through Friday
- ◆ The facility provides meals to nearly 350 individuals each day, including families with children, elderly, and working poor



OUR FOUNDATION IS OUR FUTURE

Freedom House now operates four programs; two transitional shelters, a respite program for homeless individuals being released from the hospital and our meals program, The Conrad Center.

Additional programs were established when gaps in services were identified, but the agency was founded in 1983 with the sole purpose of serving meals to those most in need. Today, the vision for the new center expands on this original purpose. The Conrad Center will be more than a place to receive a meal. Those in need of a hot, nutritious meal will also have other services available to help them to seek long-term solutions and build bridges to a new and more independent life.

BENEFITS

- ◆ A clean, safe and welcoming environment for all
- ◆ Designed for easy delivery of food and supplies
- ◆ Designed with safety and security as a main emphasis in the planning of the facility and programs
- ◆ Located closer to low-income housing where more children are raised by a single parent or other relatives that may not have the resources to provide three well-balanced meals each day
- ◆ A Case Manager will be on site to help with referrals and needs of the guests
- ◆ A satellite office of Central Intake will be on site to assist with immediate shelter needs
- ◆ *Meals on Wheels* will use The Conrad Center as a pick up site for their volunteers delivering meals to clients in the East End of Richmond
- ◆ An 18-week culinary school will operate out of The Conrad Center offering certification in food prep, catering, food safety and other industry training
- ◆ Health fairs and job information will be held and open to the public
- ◆ All other groups providing meals, including churches providing lunch during the week and groups who served weekend meals in Monroe Park, are invited to move to The Conrad Center to better coordinate services and share resources