



NORTH DAKOTA  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

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## **Meier Named Philanthropist of the Year by AFP-Northern Plains Chapter**

Bismarck, North Dakota . . . Mark Meier, Founder and Executive Director of the Heaven's Helpers Soup Café in Bismarck, was named the Philanthropist of the Year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals – Northern Plains Chapter at their virtual annual meeting and awards presentation on November 12, 2020. Meier was presented with the award earlier in the week by AFP member Kara Geiger.

Nominated by the North Dakota Community Foundation, Meier originally opened the Soup Café in March of 2009 at the former Hawk's Pit Stop Gas Station in Bismarck. All food is free at the Café, although donations are accepted if people are able to give. The Soup Café was forced to close its doors at the end of May of 2015 when the landlord terminated the lease. It reopened in its current location in January of 2018 and serves over 300 people a day.

Under Meier's guidance, the Café has expanded its services to include a wheelchair-accessible shower, a laundry room, and computers for community members that need those services. The Café also has a Life Skills Program Director to assist individuals who need help accessing other services, finding a job, or getting transportation to medical appointments. It operates with one paid staff person and 20-30 volunteers every day.

"I'm honored to receive this award, but none of this would be possible without all the volunteers and supporters." said Meier.

The Soup Café has secured grants and donations from numerous organizations over the years including the Otto Bremer Trust, the Tom & Francis Leach Foundation, Starion Bank, the BisMan Community Foundation, and Wells Fargo.

"The Heaven's Helpers Soup Café has been a blessing to everyone in the Bismarck/Mandan area – those who need its services and those who are blessed to serve – and it would not exist except for Mark, his passion for service, and his love for his fellow man," wrote Christi Stonecipher, NDCF's Director of Communications in the award nomination. "Some people give generously of their time and money, but few dedicate their entire life in service to the hungry and poor."

For more information about the Heaven's Helpers Soup Café or to volunteer for a two-hour shift, go to [www.soupcafe.org](http://www.soupcafe.org).

*The Association of Fundraising Professionals is the largest organization of professional fundraisers in the world, acting as the collective voice on matters affecting fundraising, charitable missions and non profit organizations. AFP-Northern Plains Chapter serves the state of North Dakota and NW Minnesota and provides many educational, networking and mentoring opportunities throughout the year.*

*The North Dakota Community Foundation is a public, non-profit tax-exempt corporation which receives and distributes charitable funds to support a wide range of programs that improve the quality of life for North Dakotans. NDCF currently manages over 750 funds for various North Dakota communities and donors, including 67 community foundations and over 150 scholarship funds. It holds assets in excess of \$100 million and to date has made more than \$83 million in grants all across North Dakota.*

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