

PROFILE OF A COOP ALLY: CHIPS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PETER ENDRISS

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By Oluwakemi Aladesuyi

With its dual mission to ameliorate food insecurity and homelessness in New York City, CHiPS (which stands for Community Help in Park Slope) has been serving our neighbors for decades and, during that time, witnessed how the needs of the most vulnerable among them have changed since its founding in 1971. If you're a member of the Park Slope Food Coop your initial portal to CHiPS might be as one of the options on the shift calendar. Each week Coop members fill about 100 work shifts at CHiPS—making sandwiches, cooking, washing dishes and packaging meals as well as registering guests, managing lines and working with the mobile food pantry. Many more purchase extra food for CHiPS during one of the Coop's three-a-year food drives. "Our

more than 50-year relationship has been integral to the Coop,” General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky notes. The Coop drops off dozens of less than perfect produce to CHiPS each week, enabling CHiPS to provide meal service to over 300 people every day. According to Astrinsky, the Coop’s relationship with CHiPS “not only reduces our waste, it also enables us to help our neighbors indirectly.”

Peter Endriss, CHiPS’s executive director, is at the helm of an organization that has seen the number of people served by its food service and pantry programs increase by 400 percent since the beginning of the pandemic, all while operating the Frances Residence, a private temporary shelter for new mothers. Leading an organization like CHiPS “means a thousand different things at any given time,” says Endriss. A W-2 at-will employee, he works with CHiPS’ board of directors to help the organization stay on track financially and with its division directors to make sure programming stays on mission and is well measured, relevant and improved with the input of the people CHiPS serves. Endriss’s work is expansive, encompassing administration of more efficient food service areas to fixing toilets in the residential units and managing a staff of 25 to 30, and last year, over 6,000 volunteers.

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GENERAL COORDINATOR ELINOAR ASTRINKSY

“I could be sitting here and a pipe could burst,” Endriss says. “Or we could be presented with a really unique opportunity. [Someone says] I have two cases of avocados. Can we figure out how to pick them up?” According to Endriss, the nonprofit tries to say yes to everything: “Every association, anything that someone wants to do to help out at CHiPS, we’re like, yes, let’s figure out a way to weave that into our mission.”

True to the organization’s deep roots, the “C” in CHiPS stands for community, having

once stood for “Christian,” in deference to the Catholic groups (notably St. Francis Aid) that initially founded the organization. Brother Tom, one of the longest running volunteers at CHiPS, recalls how two Franciscan brothers, a sister of St. Joseph, a Diocesan priest and a handful of parishioners wanted to do something for the neighborhood. In its earliest iteration it was a Sunday dinner for the elderly. After dinner, volunteers, mostly in their 20s and early 30s, would make rounds to visit the homebound. “The beginning of CHiPS was ad hoc,” Brother Tom says. Sister Mary Maloney, of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, taught at Bishop Loughlin High School in Fort Greene during the day and would make sure the doors of CHiPS were open in the evening to serve soup. Men would sleep on cots in the soup kitchen at nighttime. “Every now and then, one woman would come with a child and that was a little scary to me,” says Brother Tom. But a few years later the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor took the upper level of the building, a former convent for sisters who worked as religious ministers on Rikers, and turned it into a homeless shelter for single mothers and their babies.

Sister Mary Maloney was CHiPS’ first director. “She told me this many times, there was \$500 in the bank which was enough to pay two months rent, but there was no money for food,” says Brother Tom. It all came from the people of the neighborhood. “The first time they had \$1,000 in the bank it was a gift from the synagogue on Garfield Place. The Rabbi gave half from his money and half from the synagogue itself.”

In many ways CHiPS’ deep roots in the Park Slope community continue to be a saving grace in an era when so much government funding has been drying up. Since the beginning of his tenure in 2023, Endriss has seen CHiPS’ annual operating budget nearly double, to about \$2.9 million. In 2026, 40% of that budget is expected to come from individuals contributing small donations each month. The remainder is supported by larger gifts from local businesses, a few corporations and the occasional fundraising drive by public schools or community groups. “We had a local bar do a burlesque show to collect money for CHiPS. We ended up getting a few thousand dollars in donations,” Endriss says. “There are so many community members that want to help in

their own way.”

It was that kind of community outreach that initially brought Endriss into the orbit of CHiPS. In 2014, Endriss was running Runner & Stone, the bakery and restaurant on 3rd Avenue, when he helped organize “CHiPS Night Out” the organization’s first fundraising event, in which local bars and restaurants committed to donating 15% of their net sales on a given day. That led to Endriss’s fundraising for a gala. He served on the organization’s board from 2016-2021 and assumed the role of executive director in June of 2023.

In some ways being executive director is a bow on a career that has been about community and a passion for food that began in childhood. “Since I was five years old I was telling everyone that would listen that I was going to have a restaurant at some point,” says Endriss. “I remember making a diorama in elementary school of the restaurant that I wanted to open,” he added, also noting fond memories of his aunt taking the whole family to a Chinese buffet on Long Island where he tried everything. “I was obsessed with it. I was also obsessed with planetariums. So my idea was to open a Chinese smorgasbord in a planetarium and I made a little diorama with little tables and a big dome top that was going to be where the stars were projected.”

Endriss worked in restaurants throughout secondary school and college. Although he studied natural resource management and engineering at Cornell, and eventually got a masters degree in civil engineering at Stevens University, he found his way back to the kitchen when he started working at a salad station at a *New York Times* 3-star restaurant in Manhattan during a leave of absence from a job inspecting bridges.

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PETER ENDRISS, CHIPS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the fourth executive director of CHiPS, Endriss is building on the foundation that other directors had built. Over 50 years later, Endriss says he still hears stories of Sister Mary Maloney from volunteers. “I came in and got to take all these amazing things that had been built already,” he says, explaining how Denise Scaravella, the second executive director, built so much community goodwill and partnerships and how his direct predecessor, Shivonne McKay, modernized the nonprofit—adding staff and departments, measuring the impact of the nonprofit’s work and being more decisive about programming.



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Denise Scaravella was the previous Executive Director of CHiPs.

“I had this staff that I always describe as a loaded spring. Everyone was so full of ideas and good intent and so mission driven,” says Endriss. “Meetings were like ‘here are five amazing ideas, we just need to pick two of them to start and figure out how to do it.’”

Every day, 300 to 400 people come to CHiPS for its food services. “We are providing end of the line service,” said Endriss. “We’re not necessarily teaching them how to cook. We’re not helping them make more money so they don’t need to come here for food.” But CHiPS is trying to figure out how to connect these individuals with resources further upstream. Last year, it hired a director of case management to make sure there are warm handoffs to organizations that help with English language classes, job training, mental health services or addiction resources, for example. “The idea with any nonprofit is that you put yourself out of business,” Endriss adds.

That said, CHiPS just completed its five-year strategic plan. “We are on the cusp of expanding, or I often correct myself and say right-sizing our operations,” says Endriss. CHiPS has been operating out of the same 100-year-old brownstone for the past 50 years.

Looking towards the future, Endriss sees CHiPS continuing to maintain its strong presence in Park Slope while expanding into a larger building and potentially operating the pantry program from a warehouse.

As CHiPS has grown, so has the scope of the Frances Residence. Beyond providing shelter to nine mothers and their children, the program helps mothers find a path to self-sufficiency. However, shifting federal, state and city policies along with New York’s increasingly high cost of living and lack of affordable housing has made that even harder. Because the Frances Residence is a private shelter, the families who live there might have to go back into the city system for a minimum of three months in order to be eligible to apply for a government housing voucher. According to Endriss, a pilot program to address this was vetoed by the last mayoral administration.

“You do often feel like you’re in a little life raft being tossed around on an ocean of things that are outside of your control,” says Endriss. “That can be frustrating because the issues we face are immediate. Someone needs a place to live now. They need food for their families now. Not two months from now or worse yet a year from now.”

With Endriss at the helm, CHiPS is doing all it can to meet those urgent needs as soon as possible, for as many of our neighbors as possible.

Oluwakemi Aladesuyi is a journalist and yoga instructor, and makes pottery, which you can find on instagram (@lamilamiceramics)