

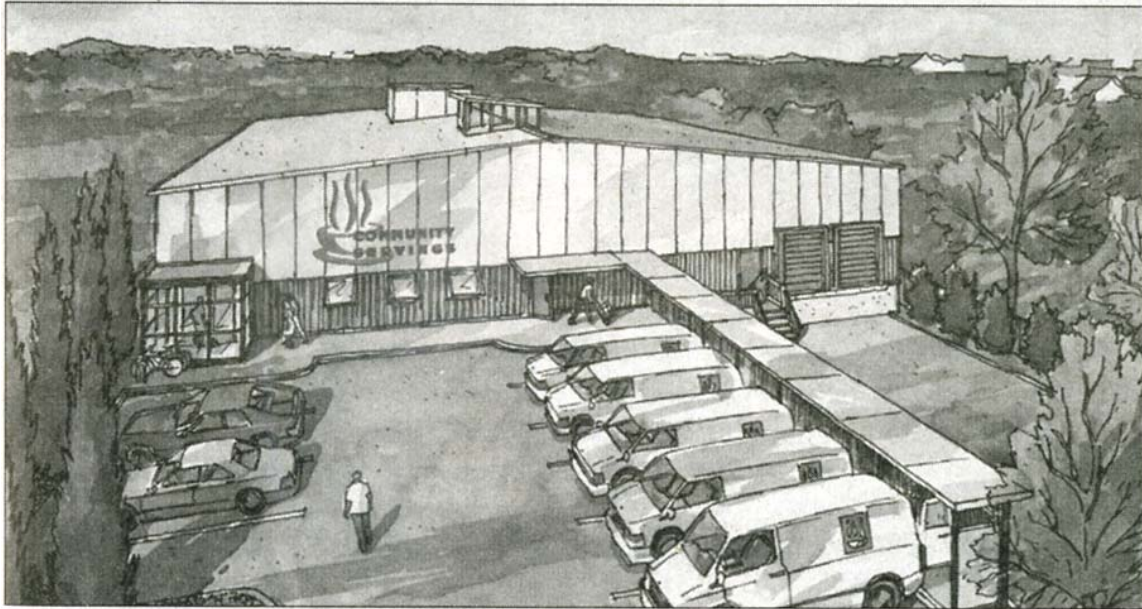
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**A rendering of the planned 13,700-square-foot facility for Community Servings. The facility will provide space for such services as job training and nutrition classes.**

# Community Servings to expand mission and space

BY RYAN ROSE WEAVER  
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Many growing families decide to re-vamp their kitchens to accommodate extra members and the newest cooking facilities. But when you've got nearly 650 mouths to feed, sometimes only a brand-new building will do.

It's no different for **Community Servings**, a meal-delivery nonprofit that serves hot meals on wheels to hundreds of clients with life-threatening illnesses as well as their caregivers and dependents. Now housed in a modest 5,700-square-foot building on Roxbury's Magazine Street, the organization will break ground on a new 13,700-square-foot facility in Jamaica Plain on Oct. 10.

"We have to have all of our dry storage out in trailers in the parking lot, people sharing desks and computers, and we're having to turn away volunteer groups because we can't accommodate them size-wise," said Executive Director **David Waters**. The new Jamaica Plain facility will allow the organization to double its space and work force, and Waters hopes to explore expanding to Lowell and Lawrence.

The new space, which is walking distance from the Orange Line's Stonybrook stop, will provide space for increased services, such as job training and nutrition classes. It will also help Community Servings finance the move by providing the kitchen space to cook and sell medically specific and culturally appropriate meals to day-care centers, senior centers and charter schools.

Community Servings has been expanding since its founding in 1990, when it began as a Dorchester-based mission geared toward serving the dietary needs of the AIDS/HIV community. It extended its mission to helping those with a range of illnesses, such as breast cancer and renal disease, and now delivers to domestic violence shelters, assisted-living complexes and nursing homes. Since those early days, it has struggled to carry out an indus-

trial-size mission — preparing about 1,200 meals a day — in a restaurant-sized kitchen.

The search for the money to build and a place to build a new home took Community Servings seven years, Waters said, because vacant industrial buildings accessible to mass transit are few in Boston's real estate market. He said the nonprofit has received support and help from Mayor **Thomas M. Menino**, the **Boston Redevelopment Authority** and the city's **Department of Neighborhood Development**.

"They have all helped us with expertise and helped guide us through the process, because they know that we're making Boston's neighborhoods stronger," Waters said. The city of Boston also agreed to purchase the current Community Servings building for its own use.

**Joan Parker**, along with her husband, **Robert Parker** of mystery novel fame, have been among the organization's staunchest supporters and key fundraisers for the 16 years it has been in operation. Parker worked on the capital campaign for the new Community Servings headquarters and now heads the current fund-raising effort to build the new Jamaica Plain facility.

The Parkers have already raised nearly half of the \$4 million needed to complete the project in only nine months, beginning with a \$100,000 donation from their own pockets. The capital campaign's board members donated nearly \$500,000 of their own money before asking individuals, corporations and foundations for the rest — and many board members pledged to feed funds into the project over the next five years.

"For many, it's the largest gift of their lives," said Joan Parker. "It's quite touching that they feel as connected to Community Servings as they do, and that they've stepped up in this manner. I'm so overwhelmed with the giving generosity of people who are outside the family, as it were, and yet they feel their connection to us."