



# Healing Meals

COMMUNITY PROJECT



Early days in the Kitchen. Amelia helping prep nourishing meals for our clients in March 2016.  
*Photo courtesy of Healing Meals Community Project archives.*

## How It All Began

Before the milestones. Before a kitchen of our own. Before the first meal was prepared, eight teens signed up to help with the very first cooking shift at Healing Meals in March 2016. Amelia was one of them.

She had already completed her mandatory service hours for the year and didn't need more. But when a friend mentioned an information night for a new organization called Healing Meals Community Project, something nudged her to show up anyway.

What she found wasn't just a place to volunteer. Amelia found purpose, mentorship, and meaningful responsibility. She discovered a community that trusted young people with work that truly mattered. "I loved the time spent cooking, learning about nutrition, and knowing that what we were creating would directly help others," she remembered.

## Growing With Healing Meals

Amelia didn't just witness the growth of Healing Meals, she grew alongside it. She helped build the organic garden at Flamig Farm. She fundraised, she ran the Hartford Marathon 5K, and she continued to prepare meals week after week.

But it was when she went on a meal delivery with her mom that she realized the direct impact she had on a local family facing a health crisis. "It wasn't just a meal...it was comfort, care, and support during a difficult time." In that doorway exchange, nourishment became something deeper.

## The Blue Apron

Amelia was one of the first recipients of a Blue Apron, for her 50 hours of volunteering, and that is when something shifted for her. "Healing Meals trusted young volunteers with real responsibility. That trust allowed us to step up, grow, and contribute in powerful ways," she shared in a recent conversation with Founder & CEO Sarah Leathers. That experience strengthened her confidence and leadership, reinforcing what she was capable of at a formative time in her life. This is the heart of her story.

## A Full-Circle Moment

Several years later, Amelia returned for a workplace volunteer day. Standing once again in the kitchen, she reflected on how formative those early experiences had been. She describes nourishment as warmth. Community as showing up for one another. Healing Meals as a place where intention and kindness are woven into everything.

Her story reminds us that when young people are trusted with meaningful responsibility, this work shapes the futures of the families we serve and the youth who grow alongside our mission.



## A Note from Our Founder

Amelia's journey is a testament to what happens when young people are trusted, when community is built with purpose, and when nourishment is understood as both food and love. It's a story that reflects the heart of Healing Meals and the ripple effect of a decade of nourishment.

Thank you for believing in the more than 800 teen volunteers who have volunteered over these past 10 years. Thank you all for helping us create something that endures. And, thank you, Amelia, for sharing your story.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Sarah & the Healing Meals Team

*Sarah Leathers*

Sarah Leathers

Founder & CEO, Healing Meals Community Project

*Healing Meals Community Project is an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Your donation is tax-deductible and directly supports nourishing families in need.*