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**House Of Bread Hopes Renovation Accommodates Growing Need**March 29, 2011 | By JENNA CARLESSO, [jcarlesso@courant.com](mailto:jcarlesso@courant.com), The Hartford Courant

Richard Messina / Hartford Courant

When the House of Bread opened about 30 years ago, it was a small operation on High Street that served coffee and doughnuts to those who needed something to eat and someplace to go.

Little more than a dozen people stopped by each day.

"It was more of an experimental thing to see if there was a need," said Sister Maureen Faenza, who co-founded the nonprofit group with Sister Theresa Fonti.

There was a need.

House of Bread, which has expanded to include a soup kitchen, day shelter and thrift store, now serves about 200 adults and more than 400 children each day. But space has been tight at its current location on Chestnut Street.

"We said, 'Why don't we expand our dining room and kitchen?' " Fonti said. "We wanted to have all of our feeding programs under one roof."

The sisters' vision is becoming a reality. Construction has begun on the 5,300-square-foot facility, which will nearly double in size by the time the project is complete. The building will get a second kitchen, a larger dining area, new offices and a conference room.

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The \$900,000 renovation is on pace to be completed by early May.

"Everything has just fallen into place," Fonti said. "We've been very fortunate."

Through the years, House of Bread has launched several programs, including services in education and affordable housing.

"We tried to meet the needs as we saw them," Fonti said. "And we just kept on growing and growing."

Four years ago, the group started a youth program called Kids Café, in which healthy meals are prepared and delivered to Boys & Girls Clubs throughout the city. When it began, organizers prepared enough food for 120 children. They now feed 470.

"One out of six kids goes to bed hungry in our country," Fonti said. "Some people can't afford healthy food."

House of Bread's renovated dining room will soon be able to accommodate more guests. Until recently, 30 people could sit down at one time for a meal. The new dining area will seat 50.

The added space — bringing the building to about 10,000 square feet — will also give the staff more room to function, with extra offices and a conference room.

The project has been a labor of love for the sisters, who began fundraising two years ago and have raised \$450,000 through private donations and grants. Roughly \$250,000 in in-kind services was donated by several companies, including Farmington-based Metro Construction and the Shipman & Goodwin law firm.

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