

No Longer Faceless The Café at Thistle Farms

West End UMC Opportunity

“The journey to The Café at Thistle Farms began for **Beth Howard** at West End United Methodist Church. There, Beth became part of small cadre of Christians seeking to deepen their faith through Covenant Discipleship. Based on John Wesley’s class meetings, Covenant Discipleship members challenge and support one another in their growth as disciples in four areas—worship, devotion, justice, and compassion. Together, Beth’s CD group created their particular accountabilities in each area. They included as an act of compassion a commitment to become more attuned to the “faceless people” around them.

Fulfilling that accountability for Beth started with simply noticing how frequently she—and others—relegated clerks, attendants, servers, immigrants, homeless people to the background of their lives. Then she began, for example, to move her attention from the exchange of a dollar for a *Contributor* paper to the person standing before her, giving not just money but also her smile, her attention, and her appreciation. The journey had taken another step.

Beth and friends from time to time would meet at The Café at Thistle Farms for lunch and conversation. She knew a bit of the history of Thistle Farms and was supportive, but as she grew in her covenant, she discovered a new opportunity—volunteering at The Café. Another step.

The ministry of Thistle Farms began in Nashville with an Episcopalian priest, the Reverend Becca Stephens, who saw in the faces of women who suffered under the chains of trafficking, prostitution, and addiction a need for unconditional love. And a home. And a community of love. And a job. Thistle Farms has healed countless women, in Nashville and beyond through the more than 40 organizations nationwide that are modeled on Thistle Farms’ whole-person recovery approach.

In addition to a comprehensive residential program for the women survivors, Thistle Farms also focuses on job skills. The women work in Thistle Farm’s social enterprises. Some manufacture and market a line of body and home products under their label and



WE Serve is an effort to help our congregation get to know one another, become acquainted with organizations West End UMC supports in Nashville, and be encouraged to volunteer. We hope you’ll listen to the interviews (hosted at westendumc.org/WEServe), and be inspired to pray for, give to, and volunteer at these ministries that are also spreading God’s love.

motto, “Love Heals.” Others staff their Global Market selling home goods, jewelry, and so on from about 30 women’s social enterprises around the world.

Other survivors prepare, cook, and serve great locally-sourced food at The Café. As a volunteer, Beth does the basic work of taking meals to customers, bussing tables, and even taking out the trash, freeing up the women to not only create great meals but also to learn important job skills. Beth’s contribution of time also frees up funds to bring another suffering woman into the program so love can heal.

Beth says the training reminds new volunteers not to ask the women about their past; but working together in love and trust, often the women will share their stories—because they are proud of how far they have come on their journey of healing. Love, indeed, heals. And to Beth Howard, no longer are they faceless.

Look for Thistle Farms offerings at West End UMC’s Advent Missions Market in December

For more information about Thistle Farms

- ◆ Talk with Beth Howard or listen to Ed Zinkiewicz’s 14-minute interview with her at westendumc.org/WEServe.
- ◆ Visit thistlefarms.org.
- ◆ Stop by The Café at Thistle Farms at 5122 Charlotte Avenue for breakfast, lunch, or high tea. Check out their menu at thecafeatthistlefarms.org.



Can you find Beth Howard? She’s volunteering!
photo credit - Peggy Napier



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