Partners, Friends, Supporters and Volunteers:

This message is in response to the numerous inquiries we have received regarding operations at the Chattanooga Community Kitchen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We’ve been monitoring the situation closely over the past few weeks, implementing additional prevention protocols on top of our usual rigorous health standards. Some additions include:

- No contact transactions and greetings for items such as meals, clothing, mail, hygiene items, etc.
- Regularly scheduled, thorough sanitization of chairs, tables, door handles, etc.
- Timed/scheduled hand-washing for front line staff/volunteers, as well as changing of gloves for food services staff/volunteers (every thirty minutes)
- Consistent ventilation, opening doors when weather allows
- The installation of numerous sanitization and hand washing stations throughout the facility
- Social distancing whenever possible to include limiting outreach activities
- Cancelling non-essential, large events such as a planned job fair

In an ideal situation, our services would be unnecessary, allowing us to join the many other organizations that have closed in response to the call for social distancing; however, our services become even more critical at times like these. The thousands of folks who turn to us each year often have no other option for help; they rely on us for access to food and water, for clothing, for housing, for shelter. They are in no position to self-quarantine. As such, our doors and shelters will remain open for the foreseeable future, with the following contact limiting protocols in place:

- Food services will begin using disposable serving materials exclusively, and all table service will cease
- Clothing give-away transactions will continue but the thrift store program will limit hours and floor shopping
- All existing, non-essential volunteer events will be canceled; no new volunteer groups will be scheduled
- Day center and dining services will remain open, but to avoid exposure people will not be able to congregate in those areas when not receiving services
- Using digital, infrared thermometers we will screen all staff and volunteers for fever as they arrive

Finally, we are preparing for the reality that as the virus spreads throughout our area, we may need to edit services further, be prepared to participate in a quarantine or we might need specific monetary resources for those we serve. While we hope that these options do not come to fruition, we are not burying our heads in the sand or pretending that the threat is not real.

Regularly scheduled food services and day center volunteers are asked to consider their own
safety and the safety of those we serve when determining whether or not to come for service. Do not come if showing any symptoms of illness or if recently around someone that has developed symptoms. Do not come if you are concerned for your own health or well-being.

If you would like to assist with our services, donations of hand-sanitizer, toilet paper, napkins, disposable plates/bowls, bottled water, face masks, nitrile gloves, bleach, umbrellas and ponchos are needed. Financial donations can be made through our website, homelesschattanooga.org, by clicking on the ‘donate now’ button in the top right corner of the page.

Thank you for making our work possible.

Sincerely,

Jens Christensen
Chief Executive Officer