

TUESDAY  
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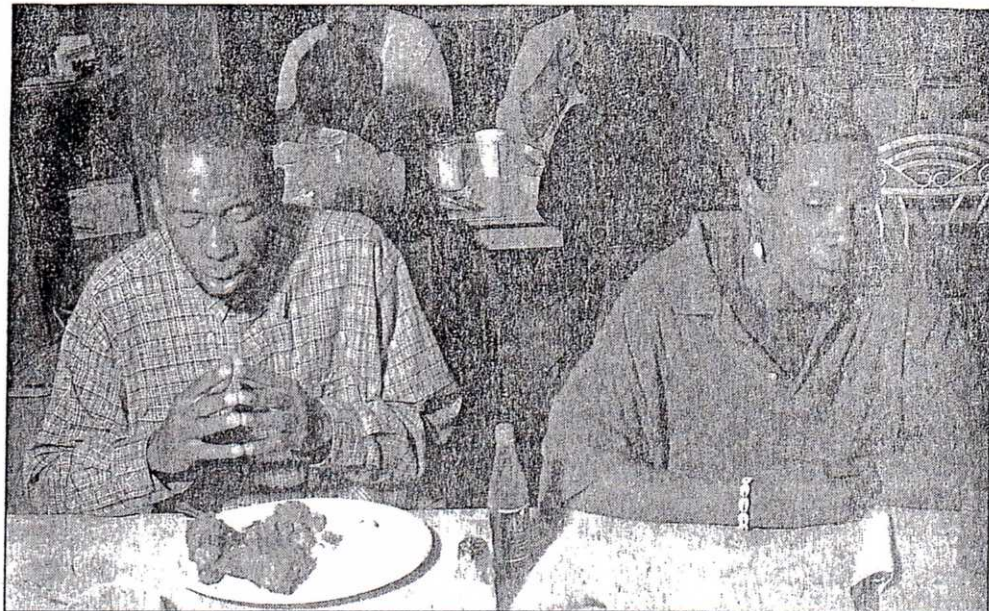


Photo for the Tribune by Anthony Robert La Penna

Edward Reed prays before dinner with Andrea Kelly on Monday at the Living Room Cafe's new facility, 806 E. 64th St., which has a bigger dining room and offices.

## A meal, inspiration, elbow room

By Jon Anderson  
Tribune staff reporter

For a restaurant, moving a block might not seem like a big deal.

But the Living Room Cafe, the Woodlawn branch of Uptown's Inspiration Cafe, offers more than food to its patrons.

"Yes, the dining room's almost double the size," project manager Theresa Perry said last week, showing a visitor around the new digs at 806 E. 64th St. "We also now have offices with doors that close. We can discuss sensitive matters with some privacy."

During the last decade, the cafe, which serves guests who are up against it, operated out of a storefront on South Cottage Grove Avenue.

In the last year, staffers and volunteers dished up 2,165 free meals to regular patrons there and another 1,092 meals to alumni who came back to share in what its organizers like to call "a therapeutic community—a resource that never goes away."

The major work went on behind the scenes.

To become part of the cafe, patrons agree to meet with a caseworker regularly. In one-on-one sessions, they set personal goals and, in order to meet them, enter programs that help with everything from healthy living to finding stable housing and a dependable income.

Now, thanks to a link-up with a local rehabber, the Living Room Cafe has more space in a better building with a nicer view.

"In the morning, the sun shines in," Perry beamed, looking around the first-floor space in a building that also houses The Grand Ballroom, a restored jewel of South Side nightlife.

The downstairs cafe space just feels good, others noted. "It inspires you to do a lot of things that are positive," guest Andrea Kelly said, looking at the brick walls, big front windows and a restaurant area with seats for 40 diners, double the capacity of the previous facility.

The shift to the new locale started in late September. Later this month, after everything is unpacked, the cafe will hold an open house to thank those who financed the move, principally the

Prince Charitable Trusts and developer Andres Schcolnik, the new landlord.

"Andy's been incredibly supportive. Most of what you see here has been on his dime," said John Pfeiffer, deputy director for development and social services at Inspiration Corporation, a non-profit group that began helping the homeless in 1989 with a small wagon filled with sandwiches and coffee.

The corporation now runs the two cafes as well as computer labs, job-training sessions, courses in restaurant skills and after-school programs for children.

"We start cooking at 5 and try to have the meal ready by 6," James Moore, a volunteer in the Living Room Cafe's steamy kitchen, reported.

"We all get along. We socialize. Everybody puts in something and gets something back," guest Edward Reed responded, before digging into a meal of fried chicken, carrots and broccoli. "Some people have issues. Some are just down on their luck," Reed added.

The Living Room Cafe, he suggested, "gives you a space to get yourself together."

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