

# Brunch Update

Issue 61 – August 2014

## House of Sufism Charity Initiative

*Addressing the most pressing needs of our community*



## Happenings

This month marks a landmark in House of Sufism's goals of serving our community. We are overjoyed to report that after four and a half years of research into the issue of youth homelessness, our volunteers have established a relationship with local service organization Bridge Over Troubled Waters, a haven for troubled youth to receive the care and attention they desperately need. Bridge is devoted to providing quality services to homeless and high-risk youth, from the immediate needs of housing and food to long-term support systems including counseling, GED classes, and medical services. Their Emergency Youth Shelter is the only one of its kind in Boston and is located downtown, conveniently accessible for any willing volunteer.

Several of our volunteers had the opportunity to visit Bridge's shelter facility, meet with their passionate staff, and witness firsthand the day-to-day operations. It was inspiring to see the level of quality care they are able to provide their clients, including a complete in-house dental office! At the same time, it was heart-wrenching to observe the youth who come in during the day to sleep on couches in the common room, knowing that they lack a real home to find peace and solace.

House of Sufism has begun donating bread and pastries to Bridge Over Troubled Waters, and we have scheduled our first day of service for lunch on August 31st. We are excited to bring our love and support to such a worthy cause. Troubled youth who are not treated with care and respect in their formative years can carry irreparable wounds that last a lifetime.

Our willing and open-hearted volunteers have the opportunity to make a positive impact on lives of turbulence and instability, simply by providing a meaningful and reliable presence.

The month of July also marks our annual water campaign, an issue of dire importance in the summer months when insufficient access to safe drinking water can be fatal. This summer, taking into account environmental considerations, we are requesting donations so that we may provide our homeless neighbors with reusable water bottles. Additionally we are reaching out to local businesses to ask them to open their doors to those in need and provide a source for clean, safe water.

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## SUNDAY SUMMARIES

**July 6st:** We served a creamy chicken salad with celery and a side of mini hot dogs dipped in bbq sauce. At the end of the day, one volunteer said, "This two hours of service is filled with wise moments that remind us of what really matters in life - the power of connection."



**July 13th:** The brunch was particularly festive due to the great number of volunteers who helped! The food was made up of a couple of different types of pasta dishes: a tomato spaghetti one and a dish of fettuccine check alfredo. Flora's father Julius was a particular hit at the shelter; everyone enjoyed his company and asked him to visit again.

One of the residents told us how happy he was to see us, especially because he has been experiencing a lot of stress in his life. He has two young children who live with their mother in North Carolina, and he is currently trying to find an apartment after receiving government affordable housing support so that his children can come stay with him. His story was moving and hopeful. It was healing to hear of his opportunity to improve his situation and create a more stable life for himself and his



children.

**July 20th:** Mohammad prepared a special meal inspired by his Persian background. The main dish was made up of rice, ground beef, and lentils. Everyone loved it! We also had a Persian style yogurt on the side and a cooked zucchini dish with fresh vegetables generously donated by a local farmer's market. Jackie remarked, "It was delicious! I liked the variety of it".



**July 27th:** The highlight of today's brunch was by far the arrival of a new volunteer and musician named Chris. Chris was especially recruited for the brunch by Mohammad after he spotted him attracting the attentions of young and old alike at Copley Square. Using a flute, Chris performed a number of colonial-era and Irish tunes. The music was quite moving and certainly sounded like something out of *The Patriot*. In fact, his music was so cheery that Sherry and Bill locked arms and began to folk dance!



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## Reflections from a Volunteer

“Before I became involved with the House of Sufism, I believed that charity was about an attempt to right an imbalance. Our institutions are fraught with imbalances, tipped towards those born into situations of

privilege. Some of us have the freedom to choose how to direct our own lives because we don't have to worry about where our next meal will come from or whether or not we'll sleep with a roof over our head. As individuals, we can try to combat inequality by using this freedom of choice to channel our time and energy outside of ourselves and improve the lives of others. In my life, I've observed how easy it can be to become absorbed in the sphere of the education system. Student life is so often focused on the self, on thinking about the future and our place in it, working continuously and making choices with self-development always at the forefront. As we face off with the great challenge of "what will we do with our lives?", we can lose perspective and forget how incredibly lucky we are to even have that choice.

"Performing service is about stepping outside of ourselves, and choosing to devote our personal resources of time and energy to the greater picture. We have the ability to transfer our power of choice to others by relieving some of the stress in their lives. When individuals no longer have to struggle to provide for their needs, they have the opportunity to consider a broader array of paths for their future. Helping to alleviate hunger and homelessness has an impact beyond immediate relief, and the small ways we serve can reverberate through people's lives.

"Despite the connotations of selflessness, however, charity can still be a personal endeavor. After spending several Sundays serving food with the other dedicated volunteers at the House of Sufism, I began to consider charity from a much less abstract perspective. As much as it is about moral values and institutions of inequality, it is also about putting a face to an abstract idea and developing personal connections. Serving others can have an equalizing effect: we give them our time and energy free from selfish expectations and in return they give us their openness and humanity. It's a means to bypass the barriers of anonymity and stigmatization, and unearth the common threads between people from all walks of life.

"It can be easy to think of homelessness as a number and become overwhelmed by the seemingly insurmountable challenge of helping all of those affected. However, we must keep in perspective our own capacity for action and trust that the hours we commit to service add up to something greater. "

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED



1. **Volunteer!** Sunday Brunch is a time commitment of only a few hours. Help us cook and clean or just spend time with our friends in need! Also, we need volunteers throughout the week to pick up donations from bakeries and deliver them to food pantries the next day.

2. **Monetary donations:** If you would like to make a contribution to House of Sufism Charity Initiative, you can write a check (payable to KN), use any credit card, or wire money through PayPal.

3. **In-kind donations:** We are always in need for milk, eggs, fruit, plastic bags, etc. for our Sunday Brunch. We also accept donations of items like household goods and furniture. All donations are tax-deductible.

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