

Brunch Update

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House of Sufism Charity Initiative

Addressing the most pressing needs of our community



"Let our New Year's resolution be this: we will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word."

- Goran Persson (sent to us by a friend at the shelter)

Happenings

This month we began the New Year with a renewed connection to cherished old friends. Our volunteers returned to serve our friends at a shelter we had not been able to visit in several months, and the response was overwhelmingly heartfelt. Residents expressed their gratitude for our service and remarked that they had missed us during our absence.

Perhaps even more touching were the unspoken gestures of compassion. One friend at the shelter, a woman in her eighties, noticed that our volunteer crew was particularly short-staffed and insisted on getting up from her chair and donning servers' gloves to lend a hand. It is this two-way street of compassion that makes our service so valuable: in the simple repeated act of serving a meal, we have built a foundation of genuine, reciprocal care and empathy.

One challenge voiced by many volunteers and friends this month was that of how to pass on these values to the younger generation. Parents are concerned that in our modern hyper-paced and virtually-focused world, children are not provided with the opportunity to strengthen the virtues of patience, selflessness, and compassion. While it may indeed be true that all of us get distracted by the pull of technology, it is especially pertinent at such a malleable young age to create an environment that emphasizes humanity above all. Some parents even expressed their dissatisfaction with turning to religious institutions to provide values for their children. Charity on the other hand, in addition to being an inherently selfless task, is also an active one. The most empowering way to learn is by doing – while the lessons preached from above by a figure of authority may not get through the skin of cynicism, true acts of charity never fail to touch the heart.



Conversation with a Friend (Justin, 24)

"My experience being homeless started off rough because I didn't know what direction to go. I didn't know homelessness is not a choice, it is a force! I didn't know where to look or what to do exactly. I didn't just want to go to any shelter. I wanted to go to a shelter that was going to help me go forward in my life and help me take positive steps of getting closer to the goals that I want to accomplish. I'm planning on giving back to my community. I have goals and achievements and places I wish to get to in my life. I am going to put my heart, mind and soul into my smallest acts, to succeed!

"I have a lot of aspirations. I'm going to be taking CNA classes. It's not really where I see myself. I've already been to college, so I already have some college credits studying business. I want to eventually own a business. I have dreams and aspirations but also I want to be able to help other young adults like myself. These are all goals I see for myself. I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sail to reach my destination".



Volunteer Reflection

Being homeless is difficult in the best of times, but homeless residents of northern cities like Boston face a particular challenge during winter, when the risk of death from exposure is ever-present. It is in these times that the love and service of our volunteers is especially needed.

During the recent cold spell, when wind chill temperatures in the city dropped below zero, 20 minutes of exposure was enough to

result in frostbite. At the same time, the closing of the bridge to Long Island and the facilities located there has resulted in Boston shelters being filled to capacity and beyond. In fact, homelessness across the United States has increased to a level not seen since the Great Depression, with over 600,000 people experiencing homelessness during part of all of 2013 – approximately one-third of them living in unsheltered locations. `

Last year the Journal of the American Medical Association published a study on mortality among homeless adults in Boston. All in all, the death rate for 25-44 year old homeless residents in Boston was found to be nine (9) times higher than for the average Massachusetts resident. For those between 44 and 65, the ratio was 4 1/2 – 1.



Statistics are helpful to understand how to best combat homelessness, but in some ways it is much simpler: our service to our homeless friends in Boston is about one heart connecting to another. Receiving love and warmth seems to be especially needed in the winter. Sharing a bit of our time and resources with those who are less fortunate is a good way to alleviate the heightened challenges of homelessness in the Boston winter.

We welcome volunteers of all backgrounds to join us in our humble efforts to address the problem of homelessness by delivering food and kindness to others.

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, 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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