

Brunch Update Issue 72 - July 2015

Sufi Service Committee of Boston

Addressing the most pressing needs of our community



Volunteers deliver bread to Rosie's Place

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

— Rabindranath Tagore

Happenings



Serving teriyaki roasted chicken is invigorating work.

Over the last month, we've continued to make almost daily deliveries of donated food to area shelters and food pantries, including Rosie's Place and St. Francis House in Boston, East End House and Margaret Fuller House in Cambridge, and Project SOUP in Somerville. So far this year we've delivered over two tons of food, including bread, pastries, sandwiches and salads.

We anticipate increased participation in our food donation program due to a recently passed law barring businesses that generate more than one ton of food waste per day from sending it to landfills.



A fancy and nutritious breakfast for volunteers featuring berries, eggs, and basil leaf.



The bread storage team at Rosie's Place.

With the advent of summer, we have also relaunched our annual water bottle 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 requested donations so that we could provide our homeless neighbors with reusable water bottles. Additionally we reached out to local businesses to ask them to open their doors to those in need and provide a source for clean, safe water.



Breakfast for volunteers.



Bill and Peter serve rice and chicken.

And of course, we continue our weekly brunch service on Sundays for tenants of a large homeless service agency through their "Supper/Brunch Club" program. The Sufi Service Committee is one of more than a dozen volunteer groups participating in the program. Each week our team of dedicated "chefs" produces a healthy and nutritious main course for the tenants, supplemented by donated or purchased side dishes, salads, fruit, pastries - and the occasional birthday cake! Recent main dishes have included salmon, rotisserie and barbequed chicken, jambalya and lamb.



Aiza prepares to serve pot roast and potatoes.



A typical day at brunch service.

Quotes of Note

"They [the volunteers] serve like a life-guard trying to save a sinking swimmer, [they] do not think how long it takes or how much effort it needs to bring comfort!"

-Sent to us by Elina (the girlfriend of a resident)

"I give to this charity because I know where my money goes!"

- Gary of Tremont Drugs

"Good hearts somehow manage to come together, and it's the people you meet along the way that make the journey so worthwhile."

- Susan Z.

VOLUNTEER REFLECTION

In a recent Boston Globe article provocatively titled "Volunteers unwanted", Sacha Pfeiffer explores some of the tensions between staff and volunteers in the nonprofit world. Pfeiffer's article focuses particularly on corporate "days of service", when groups of employees of a company spend a day performing community service. She points out that while "the free staffing can be invaluable", it can also amount to "burdensome, time-consuming headaches" sometimes "of dubious value".

It's difficult to say how widespread this problem is, as the companies providing volunteers are often also large financial donors, making the nonprofits reluctant to suggest ways in which the situation might be improved, for fear that reduced funding might result. This is quite understandable; in the area of homelessness, for example, providing people with short-term and long-term shelter is an expensive undertaking, and the agencies involved can ill afford to alienate any of their financial supporters.



We delivered boxes of clothes to St. Francis House.

So far our weekly brunch service has done a good job of avoiding these pitfalls. The main focus of our effort is providing food, not a one-time "team building experience". Many of our volunteers have been attending on a regular basis for months or years, allowing for the growth of friendship both among the volunteers and with the recipients of our services. The weekly brunch also provides an opportunity for the residents to socialize together – all of this with minimal impact on the hosting agency's resources (in this case the Pine Street Inn) beyond the presence of a staff member for the two hours needed for the brunch service.

Still, we should always appreciate the fact that not all staff members' experience with volunteers have been positive ones – and also appreciate the extra efforts required on their part to make our volunteer program a success.

Here at the Sufi Service Center, of course, there are no "unwanted" volunteers. Whatever your skills, abilities or schedule, we can help you find a role in the effort to end hunger and homelessness.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED



Ali serves and shares a laugh.

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!
2. Monetary and in-kind donations: If you would like to make a contribution to the Sufi Service Committee Inc., you can write a check, use any credit card, or wire money through PayPal. We are always in need for milk, eggs, fruit, plastic bags, etc. for our Sunday Brunch. We also accept donations of clothes, household goods and furniture. Currently we need more clothes than household items. All donations are tax-deductible.
3. Drive! We need volunteers throughout the week to pick up bakery and food donations and deliver them to food pantries and shelters.

Contact:

Moh Noorae
Sufi Service Committee of Boston
84 Pembroke Street, Boston, MA 02118
sufiserviceboston@gmail.com
www.nimatullahisufiboston.org/charity.html