

# Brunch Update

Issue 86 - September 2016  
Sufi Service Committee of Boston

*Addressing the most pressing needs of our community*



*Volunteers at Noor Oriental Rugs.*

## Happenings

Every Sunday, volunteers from the Sufi Service Committee of Boston gather together to tackle one of the biggest problems that homeless individuals face: access to clothing. Starting at 10:00 a.m. the volunteers meet, eat breakfast, and sort through piles of donated clothes as a team. They know that having access to clean clothes can radically change a person's life in the immediate and long term sense. Whether it is a professional blouse perfect for interviews, overalls for a fast-growing kindergartener, or thick soled walking shoes, every donation helps.

Although there is a core group of regulars, there are always new friends and family members who cycle through when they can, broadening the already diverse array of ages, ethnicities, and religions represented. Volunteers are as different as can be, but with important work to be done, and plenty of jokes along the way, those differences fade: a woman in hijab asks a man about his husband while they label boxes, a retired woman gives advice to a recent graduate as they fold baby clothes.



The volunteers spend hours categorizing items while chatting and listening to live musical accompaniment. They build friendships, make professional connections, and share other volunteer opportunities. New faces are warmly welcomed and it does not take long to see why: everyone is present because they want to make a difference in their community, and the best way to do so is to work as one.

Dr. Alireza Nurbakhsh, Master of Nimatullahi Sufi Order and the Founder of Sufi Service Committee teaches that

Sufism means to practice love first and foremost. Practicing love means to love indiscriminately. Love, unlike reason, is blind. It does not ask questions; it does not listen to pros and cons. The path of love is inclusive. It is not concerned with gender, sexual orientation, color or race. Nor is it concerned with self-preservation.

I was a newcomer, but even I forgot that by the end of the day. I was enveloped into the group quickly by warm smiles and interested questions. I soon understood what brings these people back every week. Love beats strongly in each of their hearts, a love that passes through the family and friends working side by side. It is love that keeps their spirits high as they meticulously fold and repackage mountains of clothing, and it is love that fuels their energy to better the community we all live in.

-Rebecca Reibstein



*A scrumptious and colorful breakfast medley of corn on the cob, roasted potatoes, scrambled eggs, pancakes, roasted peppers, and roasted eggplant.*

## Please Join Us for the First Anniversary of the Sufi Service Committee Clothes Drive

Friday September 16, 2016  
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Noor Oriental Rugs, Inc.  
769 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138

Keynote address by  
Cambridge Mayor Denise Simmons

As we enjoy the warmer seasons of 2016, we must not forget how the colder seasons affect the less fortunate homeless population in our neighborhood. Our aim is to provide warmer clothes to everyone in need as a new outfit may provide that boost in self-confidence needed by those struggling to improve their lives.

### One in Seven in United States Live in Poverty

The International Monetary Fund published a comprehensive report this summer urging the U.S. to tackle its poverty problem. About one in seven are living below the poverty line.



*Appleton Cafe staff present their weekly donation.*



*Bobby jamming out at Sunday Brunch.*



*Michael takes us airborne with his tunes.*

## Reflection from a Happy Volunteer

There is an Urdu idiom that roughly means: “If you are a pigeon seeing a cat running right at you, closing your eyes will not help you”.

The Greater Boston area is my new home - yes colder than I'd prefer, but lovelier in many ways, and so is the community. However, the most pressing need in my new community are my neighbors living in less than imaginable conditions of poverty.

Closing my eyes to their need will not make the cat, or the danger it brings, disappear.

Seeing people in need both breaks my heart, and makes me count my blessings. Did I do anything to deserve all I have? The answer is No. Did less fortunate folks do something wrong to be less fortunate? Again the answer is No. Then why is it so? The question can engage multiple economists and others, and while they are busy figuring it out what can I do as an individual? What is my part in it? Even if I do not have much in material terms, I have got myself to offer. The time spent



towards making someone else's life better, keeping someone clothed and fed, is a warm feeling in itself, and one that I hope to continue.

One wonderful opportunity that I came across is the clothing drive led by the Sufi Service Committee of Boston. Once there, I felt in the company of people who truly think giving back to community can make a difference. I might not be the most experienced, but I can always offer my time and energy. And so did my daughter! Her young mind did not question for a second why she should be folding, tagging, and organizing the bags of clothes going out to the needy, although it's totally a different story between her and her own closet! The point is, here, she felt the importance of doing something for a bigger cause. When I asked her about the service later on, she said: "It was good because it was to help other people". I further probed her on why she thinks she should help others? She replied: "Because they are human beings and they have equal rights!"

Sorting clothes, blankets that keep out the cold, and shoes that will give a snug hug to tired feet, felt almost like touching the lives of people who will use them. It's more than distributing donated merchandise; it's an opportunity to share your blessings, give back to the community, and bring back a smile.

It was really not a big chunk out of my day, but it was an important way for me to realize that I can make a difference in someone else's life. It is so important that I volunteer more than once, maybe even do it until the cat isn't there anymore! I look forward to being part of the project in coming weeks, or even years, and look forward to the difference this effort brings about in the beautiful community it serves.

*Shumaila Qazafi is a homemaker living in Greater Boston. She loves to read and especially enjoys reading about Sufism. When she is not reading or busy with kids, she paints and does interior design projects around the house. She appreciates art and designs, especially the power of poetry and calligraphy. She believes there is much more common among faiths than there is different. And if we share our blessings, there is plenty for everyone, which partly describes how she landed with the charity service. If you want to be friends with Shumaila, you have to love cats (not the kind mentioned above in the article)!*



*Lucky and Sisia enjoying the outdoors. Lucky says "..... I miss you guys so much! I'm looking in to volunteering around here, but nothing could ever replace the family that you are to me. I hope all is well with you. Love, Lucky"*

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED



*Mo, Stephen, and company take a respite from service.*

Volunteers of all background are welcome to get involved by:

- Preparing and serving meals
- Donating and organizing clothes
- Providing administrative assistance
- Making financial contributions

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