

# Soup Scoop

Volume 40  
November 2020

\*\*\*\*\*

*The mission of the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen is to feed the hungry of our community regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. We welcome all volunteers to this service who share an unconditional positive regard for every human being. We provide a safe, respectful, and inviting environment in an atmosphere of hope and dignity.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Daily Bread is an entirely volunteer-run organization. Founded in 2009, Daily Bread serves a hot nutritious lunch seven days a week at 116 N. First Street, Champaign. Due to COVID-19, lunches are served from 11:00 to 12:30 pm through the front door.

*“I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future.”  
Ebenezer Scrooge-A Christmas Carol*



Ebenezer Scrooge is famous for saying “Bah, Humbug!” an expression that volunteers and guests at the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen are feeling eight months into the Covid-19 pandemic that has closed our doors to guests and changed lives in so many ways.

Christmas has never been an easy time for guests at Daily Bread. It’s hard to celebrate when times are hard, when cold winds blow, when rent is due, when your stomach is rumbling, when cupboards and pockets are empty. At Daily Bread we know that Christmas is a difficult time for many of our guests, and we’ve always tried, in ways large and small, to lift the spirits of our guests and bring smiles to people’s faces during the holiday season.

This Christmas, in the time of Covid, will be even more difficult for our guests. Just as Covid has changed so much in the world we live in, it has changed Christmas at the soup kitchen. Bah, Humbug!

## Christmas Past at the Soup Kitchen

How did we celebrate Christmas in past years at Daily Bread? There were so many special ways that we shared this special season with our guests and so many people in the generous C-U community who helped make the holidays brighter for our guests. School classrooms, Girl Scout troops, and home schoolers decorated lunch bags with stickers and bright colored drawings for our guests to enjoy. Children made decorations that brightened the tables in our dining room. The C-U Garden Club brought Christmas trees and decorations that turned our building festive. Volunteers hung garlands from the ceiling and dangled ornaments.



A volunteer came in and took pictures of guests in front of a beautiful tree, printed the pictures, and gave them out the next day to guests. People donated Christmas cards with stamped envelopes, so that guests could send holiday greetings home.☺

Santa periodically showed up and greeted guests with a hearty HO, HO, HO! We received lots of donations of candy canes and other Christmas sweets that Santa handed out to children. Even some of our adult guests enjoyed the candy canes!

Candy canes weren't the only treat for guests in years gone by. The Champaign Central High School band sold fruit as a fundraiser and encouraged supporters who didn't want a case of fruit to buy a case and donate it to Daily Bread. Oranges and grapefruit abounded during the holidays. We also always seemed to get a huge supply of Christmas cookies from loyal donors Panera and Harvest Market.

We not only decorated the building, we filled the air with Christmas music. Carols played over our PA system. Volunteers occasionally burst into happy song. Guests volunteered to begin the meal with a sung prayer. Sometimes guests who played the piano would sit down at the piano in the entryway and play some carols.



We served a delicious Christmas dinner every year on Christmas Eve. Two years ago the highlight of the meal was smoked turkey, smoked especially for us by Black Dog Smoke and Ale House. Last year we served turkey again, this time donated by two of our loyal volunteers.

The highlight of the holidays was always our annual Christmas Backpack Giveaway where we gave out over 800 very generously packed backpacks in just over two hours! The backpacks were donated by individuals and groups and filled with toiletries, gloves, hats, socks, sweatshirts, etc., all items that helped guests survive a cold Champaign winter.

Daily Bread has always felt more like a community than just a soup kitchen, and the month of December was always filled with smiles and handshakes and hugs and well wishes.

### **Christmas Present at the Soup Kitchen**

*“While there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humor.”* A wise man, Charles Dickens could have been describing life at Daily Bread in 2020.

Christmas this year at Daily Bread will be very different from previous years. As the Covid pandemic continues to rage all around us, we have had to change our ways of serving meals to follow Public Health protocols and to protect both our volunteers and our guests. Guests are no longer allowed in the building at any time. Instead, guests are served a take-out hot lunch, a sack lunch, and a bottled water through the front door. Daily crews operate with a reduced number of volunteers to limit the number of people in the building at any one time.

Our numbers have remained high. We are serving well over 200 guests every day. Some days we've served over 300 guests. Guests wave through the window and send thanks to the cooks by way of the volunteers handing out sacks.

But even in this time of *'infection and sorrow'*, there is *'laughter and good humor.'* Volunteers find joy in fulfilling the mission of the soup kitchen, even though what we are doing feels very different without the physical presence of our guests. Sometimes, there is dancing to the rock and roll music that plays through the speakers. Sometimes, we have contests to see who guesses closest to the number of meals served. But we always wear our masks, and we always social distance, even as we stir the pots, dish out the meal, or dance the Mashed Potato! (FYI, the average age of our volunteers is over 60. The Mashed Potato was big in the '60's!)

Sadly, there will be no Christmas trees or pictures or table decorations or backpacks. No handshakes, no hugs! No Christmas music. No sung prayers. We will, however, send everyone away with a delicious, nutritious hot meal, a hearty sack lunch, and an occasional Christmas cookie. We've heard that Central High School band members are still selling oranges so our guests will get fruit, and there will probably be turkey for Christmas Eve Dinner—but it will be served in a take-out container with a Christmas cookie for dessert.. While backpacks won't be available, we will hand out knapsacks filled with essential items to our guests (keep reading for more information about the knapsacks). And Santa may return with some candy canes for guests standing in line!



### Christmas Future at the Soup Kitchen



In the words of Ebenezer Scrooge at the end of A Christmas Carol, *"I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to every-body! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"*

Next Christmas, if guests are back eating lunch in the dining room, if all our volunteers and guests can return, if we can throw away our masks, if guests and volunteers are all safely vaccinated, if Christmas trees and garlands once again decorate our halls, if backpacks are packed and handed out, if Santa once again greets guests, if the dining room is filled with the good smells of roasting turkey and baking pies, if all that happens, then guests and volunteers will be as happy as Mr. Scrooge! We will be happy and giddy and merry!

And we will all feel in our hearts Tiny Tim's prayer: *"God Bless Us, Every One!"*<sup>77</sup>

## Things That Make Us Happy in the Time of Covid

While we are committed to serving our guests a hearty, nutritious meal, we are also committed to keeping them healthy and virus free. Serving over 200 guests in just 90 minutes makes social distancing difficult. Masks can be expensive and not readily available. We are very grateful for the \$6600 grant from the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois that allowed us to purchase masks to hand out to guests. Reminding guests to social distance as they wait in



line and handing out masks to guests who don't have them has become a regular job for Board Member Charlie Brown and his security assistants, Derrick and Randy.

In addition, we are very grateful to Walgreens, who has volunteered to set up shop and provide free flu shots for our guests in early November.

### Knapsack Giveaway

For the last eleven years, we have handed out generously filled backpacks to the men and women who are our guests at lunch. For many, these backpacks would be their only present. There were always lots of smiles on Backpack Day. Many of you donated the filled backpacks.

Sadly, due to Covid, we can't celebrate a 12<sup>th</sup> year of Backpack Giveaway in our usual way because we can't allow guests into the building. (Once again, Bah Humbug!) Instead, this year we are planning a Knapsack Giveaway in mid December. We are planning to buy knapsacks in two colors and fill them with toiletries, hats, gloves, and scarves. We will hand out the knapsacks from the front door just as we hand out hot meals every day.

We are asking for your help to fill the knapsacks. In specific, we are looking for donations of deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, shaving cream, razors, hand lotion for hands chapped by the cold, hand warmers, chap stick, gloves, hats, and scarves. We would like to also include a small treat such as candy bars, chips, etc. Because these knapsacks will be a special gift for our guests, we are asking that all items be NEW.

Last year we gave away over 800 backpacks in just over two hours. We are anticipating that we will need that many or more knapsacks, so your help will be much appreciated.

Donations can be dropped off at the back door of the soup kitchen (116 N. First Street, Champaign) between the hours of 9-12:30. Items can also be dropped off at Ellen Harms' (705 S. Elm Blvd. 356-2551), at Pam Hagle's (713 S. Elm Blvd. 359-3245), or at Ruthann Evans' (4414 Crossgate Dr. 398-5687). Please make sure that you leave your name when you drop off items. Tax forms will be available at drop-off sites. And don't forget to wear your mask!

We are extremely grateful to everyone who participates in this Knapsack Giveaway and brings some of the joy and magic of the season to our guests at the soup kitchen during this very difficult time. This year, you bring the STUFF, and we'll Stuff the knapsacks. And, hopefully, in 2021, we will all be back in the Backpack business again.

## A Special Volunteer

2020 has been a year full of mixed emotions for long-time Sunday cook, Kari Imlay. Last year she celebrated the engagements of both her son Sam and her daughter Leah with weddings scheduled for November 2020 in New Hampshire for her son and in mid-October in Champaign for her daughter. And then came COVID-19!

Kari and her daughter cautiously proceeded to make plans for a wedding in Champaign. A rehearsal dinner was reserved at El Toro Bravo, the family's favorite local restaurant. However, when the groom changed jobs in June and realized that travel was so severely restricted by his new employer that, due to the pandemic, he might have to miss his own wedding, the wedding was postponed, and the reservation at El Toro was cancelled.

Realizing that restaurants and their staff are among the hardest hit by the pandemic, Kari got an idea! She decided to support this local restaurant by having El Toro Bravo supply a Sunday lunch at DBSK. On Sunday, November 8, in honor of her daughter's engagement as well as her son's upcoming wedding, El Toro Bravo will deliver a delicious hot meal to serve for lunch at Daily Bread—courtesy of Kari!

Kari began working at the soup kitchen back in 2007 when it was run from the St. Jude Catholic Worker House, and both Sam and Leah spent time helping when they were younger. Kari is thankful for the good that DBSK does for our community. And DBSK is grateful to have volunteers like Kari! (BTW, son Sam's wedding is going on as scheduled in New Hampshire, much reduced in size and scope.)



## Covid Update (or Things that Make Us Unhappy)

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, generous donations of food continue to come in, so we have plenty of options for serving delicious hot meals. Our volunteers remain hardworking, devoted, and cheerful. Our guests continue to come and do their best to socially distance. But our expenses have continued to rise. We are purchasing around 250 biodegradable take-out clamshells, 250 packaged plastic utensils, and 250 bottles of water a day, which comes to about 7,500 clamshells, 7,500 utensils, and 7,500 bottles of water a month. (I'm not calculating these numbers in years yet. It's too disheartening to think that we will still be serving out the front door a year from now! Bah, Humbug!). We are also handing out about 30 masks a day or 900 a month. In addition, several fundraisers that have supported DBSK have been canceled or postponed.

And as the weather gets colder, we worry about guests standing out in the cold. We've been brainstorming ideas with limited success so far.

We are grateful for all the support we've received: financial support and the wealth of good thoughts and prayers that were sent our way in years past. We welcome that continued support in this year of Covid, and we look forward to better times in the years ahead.

Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, Inc.  
P.O. Box 648  
Champaign, IL 61824-0648

*“I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round, as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely...” Bob Cratchett-A Christmas Carol*

Cash donations always gratefully accepted  
Daily Bread Soup Kitchen  
P.O. Box 648 Champaign, IL 61824-0648  
or at [dailybreadsoupkitchen.com](http://dailybreadsoupkitchen.com)

