

Soup Scoop

Volume 45
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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, take-out lunches are served from 10:30 to 12:30 pm through the front door.

Ode to Daily Bread Volunteers

Commitment! It's a word we know.
It means you just don't let it go.
You hang in there and try to do,
The best you can to follow through.
Two years ago, our Daily Bread,
Saw trouble looming straight ahead.
With virus regulations set,
How could our guests' lunch needs be met?
Thanks be that good friend Julie Pryde,
From Public Health was on our side.
To counsel, showing us the way,
We could keep serving every day.
The rules were strict! Big changes made,
So Daily Bread could make the grade.
No more indoors, hot lunches went,
Out the door. Clamshells were sent.
Cooking crews were trimmed to few.
Masked, they knew just what to do.
Ingeniously they compromised,
Amazing menus they devised!
Self-distancing and having fun,
There's now a record they have won.
Since Covid made the world more gray,
They have not missed a single day!

In admiration!
Ellen McDowell,
DBSK President Emeritus



***“Here’s to All Daily Bread Volunteers,
Those Dedicated People Who Believe in All Work and No Pay.”***



Years ago, when the soup kitchen was known as Catholic Worker House, Ellen McDowell, long time president, was quoted in The News-Gazette. “Soup kitchen volunteers,” she said, “cover the spectrum from retired military and conservative Christians to people who are ‘pretty far left.’ You wouldn’t have much luck amalgamating them to go and protest on North Prospect, but you couldn’t keep them away from the soup kitchen. They’re there to serve, and they understand that.”

Mrs. McDowell could have been describing the daily crews that prepare and serve meals today at Daily Bread. Our volunteers are old and young (maybe older and younger would be more apt), male and female, Republican and Democrat. They are retired teachers, doctors, professors, stay at home moms, grandparents, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, agnostics. There’s not a lot that they agree on except that they wouldn’t want to be anywhere except at Daily Bread on the day they volunteer. Daily Bread volunteers are bonded through a shared commitment of service to others, a shared commitment to the mission of the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen to feed the hungry of our community.

Years later, Ellen McDowell, now Daily Bread’s President Emeritus but still the soup kitchen’s north star, wrote the poem on the front page to celebrate the volunteers who have worked so hard to keep the soup kitchen up and running and providing hot meals to the hungry of the community during the pandemic. In this newsletter, we want to celebrate our volunteers. We want to show you just what those volunteers do to keep the hungry of our community fed.

Facts You Need to Know:

With very few exceptions, (i.e., we do pay a cleaning crew to come in and mop the floor), Daily Bread Soup Kitchen operates almost completely with volunteers. We pay no salaries. Volunteers do it all. Volunteer retired accountants keep our books and pay our bills. Volunteers order our supplies, write our newsletters, plan our menus, run our fundraisers, write our grants.



The numbers of meals we are serving are continually increasing. Most days 300+ hot meals go out our doors in two hours; 400 meal days are happening more and more often. Every day we also make close to 300 sack lunches for guests to take home for dinner.

Daily Bread functions with more than 200 dedicated volunteers. Every volunteer is part of a daily crew, and each daily crew operates with 20-30 volunteers on its roster. Our weekday volunteer crews tend to be older. Our weekend crews skew younger.

What Volunteers Do On an Average Day at DBSK



Cooks arrive around 7 am and begin by checking what items were left over from the previous day. Although menus were planned earlier, our creative cooks incorporate leftovers and new donations into their menus.

Someone brews coffee. Someone fills the three sinks in the dishwashing area and turns on the dishwasher. Someone takes down chairs in the dining room. Someone turns on the cooler and the pans on the serving line as well as the warmer boxes.

80 pounds of ground beef is browned for spaghetti, or 100 chicken breasts are sliced and baked for chicken and noodles, or 300 pork chops are marinated in BBQ sauce. It takes a lot of meat to give every guest a serving of protein.

Meanwhile, someone may be shucking 300 ears of corn or cutting up fresh green beans, asparagus, or broccoli (If we are lucky enough to get fresh veggies donated; if not, that same someone will be opening up can after can of corn or peas.)

Our salad makers are busy tearing up lettuce, chopping up tomatoes, dicing celery and carrots, and mixing up salad dressings.

Another cook is slicing bread donated by Panera and slathering the slices with garlic and butter.

The sandwich makers are making and bagging 300 sandwiches (275 ham or turkey with cheese, 25 peanut butter and jelly) for sack lunches. Fifty sack lunches are put aside for dinner for the overnight guests at C-U at Home.

Someone is using the meat slicer to slice rolls of ham and turkey for tomorrow's sandwiches and hoping that they don't slice a finger instead.

If we are lucky and dessert donations are ample, a volunteer is stationed near or at the dessert frig cutting up desserts. On days when our dessert frig is bare, volunteers are stirring up brownie mixes and fighting for oven space with the cooks.





And the Work Goes On...

Meanwhile, a volunteer is opening up large bags of chips and rebagging them into individual servings for the sack lunches. Another volunteer is bagging up individual cookies for the sweets.

In the front, volunteers are opening up 300 sack lunch bags and adding a sandwich, a bag of chips, and a sweet.

Two volunteers are at the Eastern Illinois Foodbank every weekday, picking up food that has been ordered, and searching for fruits and veggies, dairy products, breads, and desserts.

Another volunteer is at Gordon Food Service, picking up produce, dairy, desserts, etc.

A restocking crew is in the back, sorting through donations, shelving non-perishables, marking items by dates, and finding space for frozen and refrigerated products in our walk-in freezer and frig.

A volunteer is opening 300 plastic produce bags, ready to be filled with clamshells.

At 10:15, servers man their stations on the serving line and start filling clamshells with an entrée, a starch, a vegetable, a salad, and a dessert. Meals are placed in plastic bags, and runners take loaded carts of hot meals to the front where bags are tied.

At 10:30, a smiling volunteer hands the first guest a hot meal, a sack lunch, and a drink. The line will usually not stop until 12:30. That volunteer will still be smiling!

Cooks are constantly monitoring to make sure that food is going far enough and checking to determine if they need to start preparing an emergency option. **WE NEVER RUN OUT OF FOOD!**

Volunteers on the sidewalk chat with guests, answer questions, and try to keep the line moving in a peaceful manner. In inclement weather they will sometimes hand out rain ponchos.

Meanwhile, a volunteer at the side door will be handing out mail to the homeless guests who use our address as their mailing address.

On some days volunteers will be handing out bags of fresh fruits and vegetables; on other days guests will be offered donated bread, donated canned goods, or toiletries.

On some days volunteers from our assistance committee will be taking applications for bus passes, homeless certifications, state ID's, birth certificates, and other forms of assistance.





Several volunteers will be sweating in the dishwashing area as they wash pans, utensils, and other cooking items.

When the last meal is given out, the work's not done. There are more dishes to wash, surfaces to scrub and sanitize, leftovers to put away, and next week's meal to plan.

WHEW! No wonder all the 'older' volunteers are too tired to mop the floor! (Check out Jim in the picture at right!!)

"Volunteering," someone once said, "*Is a Work of Heart.*" Daily Bread volunteers have the biggest hearts!



And a Final Word on Volunteers...

The Tuesday crew is thrilled to have WCIA Channel 3's newscaster Matthew White volunteering with us, handing out mail and fresh produce with Crew Chief Charlie E. Our guests also have enjoyed meeting this Champaign celebrity. Recently, a guest asked if she could get a picture with Matthew. Matthew and Charlie stood next to her, and smiled broadly, only to realize that her friend wasn't taking a picture. Then the guest nudged Charlie and gently pushed him out of the picture. 'I only want Matthew,' she said.

Sorry Charlie, but nobody at Daily Bread volunteers for glory and fame! As someone once said, "*Volunteers work for a cause, not for applause.*"



Want To Help?

We are currently well supplied with volunteers, but we anticipate that our volunteer needs will grow as soon as we are able to open our doors and serve hot meals inside, a time that we hope comes soon. Check our website dailybreadsoupkitchen.com for more information about volunteering.

Donations are always needed. Our expenses, like our numbers, keep going up and up and up!



Also, we will once again be giving out filled knapsacks as a Christmas gift to our guests. We had hoped to be able to return to giving out filled backpacks, but that will have to wait another year. We will be asking for donations of toiletries as well as cold weather items such as socks, gloves, hats, and scarves to fill the knapsacks. We will have knapsacks available to individuals and groups who want to fill them, and we will very happily accept donated items for our volunteers to fill. We hope that many of you will participate in our annual knapsack/backpack project and help make Christmas a bit brighter for our guests. There will be more information in our next newsletter or on the website. Call Ellen at 217-356-2551 or email her at ellenharms@aol.com with questions.

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*“A pessimist sees a glass as being half empty.
An optimist sees the glass as being half full.
But a volunteer sees a glass of water and starts looking for someone who might be thirsty.”*

G. Donald Gale



Cash donations very gratefully accepted at:
Daily Bread Soup Kitchen
P.O. Box 648 Champaign, IL 61824-0648
or dailybreadsoupkitchen.com