

Soup Scoop 54

August, 2025

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. Guests may either eat in the dining room or get a take-home meal through our takeout window. Hours are from 10:30 to 12:15.

“We Are Family. Get Up Everybody and Sing...”

A guest came up to a volunteer who was serving drinks on Tuesday. “I’ve been wondering,” he said, “exactly how this place works. I’ve never been here before, but I can’t believe how good my meal was. It was like a real meal, not the usual soup and sandwich that I’ve gotten in other soup kitchens. And I can’t believe how kind everyone has been to me. Everyone smiles and asks if I need anything. I can’t help but wonder, are you, all of you, a family that does this? Are you all related?”

It was an interesting question. Clearly Daily Bread is not run by one giant family (although the volunteer did wink at her daughter who was helping serve drinks). Our volunteers, all 200+ of them, for the most part, aren’t related by marriage or blood. They are a broad cross-section of our Champaign-Urbana community, a variety of ages, religions, nationalities, etc. But they are related to each other by a strong commitment to feeding the hungry in our community in, according to our mission statement, ‘an atmosphere of hope and dignity.’ Our volunteers are related by a strong commitment to showing up week after week, month after month, (for many year after year), to do their part to provide a positive experience for guests like the one on that Tuesday.

An unsourced quote recently said it best: *‘Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.’* Our volunteers want to live in a kind and generous community. They believe they have found that sort of community in Champaign.

Daily Bread operates on a crew system with volunteers being assigned to a specific day. Tuesday was the above volunteer’s day. Her friends, her family, even the woman who cuts her hair, all know that she’s not available on Tuesdays. She spends five hours at Daily Bread—and then goes home and takes a nap. Most volunteers do the same.

While most of our volunteers aren’t related, we do appreciate the volunteers who join us as a team. We have long time married couples, we have mother/daughter pairs, we have boyfriend/girlfriends, we have sisters, we have brothers. Lisa and Stephen (right) have been married 30+ years and excel at sandwich making, dishwashing, and just about any job that needs doing. I’m guessing that Lisa and Stephen were two of the volunteers who were smiling at our guest. The guest probably thought that they were related.





The **Monday Crew** is co-led by Pam Rank and Brownie Kocher, who refuse to call themselves crew chiefs, although the rest of us do. They try hard to keep their volunteers cross-trained in most jobs. Many Monday volunteers have worked at DBSK for years.



The **Tuesday Crew** leader is Charlie Evans, a retired University of Illinois administrator. They like to think that they are the most fun crew, but we are guessing that all crews feel that way. They proudly wear their 'Awesome Tuesday' aprons. They pride themselves on their Taco Tuesday meal.



The **Wednesday Crew** leader is Bob Goss, who happens to also be the President of the DBSK Board (and who happened to be in England when this picture was taken). Wednesday is a particularly busy day at DBSK because, besides always serving a plethora of delicious food, the Assistance Committee meets with guests who need help with bus passes, state IDs, and other issues.



The **Thursday Crew** leader is Yvette Whitely, who also is the DBSK Board Vice-President, the food procurement coordinator, and the Thursday chief cook! Whew! Fortunately, she is surrounded with a very able crew that prides itself on its efficiency, its camaraderie, and its ham and beans!



The **Friday Crew** chief is Ron Sentowski, a local artist and owner of a construction company. While most of our volunteers take a nap after closing, the Friday Crew likes to regroup and recoup at the Esquire! They may be more fun than the Tuesday Crew. They are also famous for their vegetarian dishes.



Jeff Carns, the **Saturday Crew** chief, is the longest serving DBSK crew chief, taking the reins at St. Jude's Catholic Worker House, three weeks after beginning to volunteer in 1997. The Saturday Crew is our youngest group, being largely staffed by students. Everyone has fun on Saturday except Jeff.



The **Sunday Crew** chief is Alex Breen, a retired University of Illinois IT specialist, who, not surprisingly, has also taken on the job of IT coordinator at DBSK. The Friday crew, to the delight of our guests, has been the first crew to reintroduce soup to its menu.

It's been a very busy summer at Daily Bread this year. Our numbers have been extremely high. We've been serving well over 400 meals every day. Several days over 500 hot meals were served inside and handed out the take-out window. One epic day we hit a new high of 601 hot meals! And we've handed out almost that many sack lunches for guests to take home as an evening meal. As you all well know, the Champaign temperatures have been quite high as well. This summer has been a challenge. It's only because of the dedication of our hardworking volunteers (and the generous donations that we have continued to receive from the community) that every guest has left well fed. And every volunteer has left still smiling, but ready for that well-deserved nap! Kudos to All!!

Journalist Jane Howard once wrote: *"Call it a clan, call it a crew, call it a tribe, call it a family: Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one."* Every Daily Bread volunteer is proud and happy to be part of the Daily Bread 'family.'

So, What Else is Happening This Summer at DBSK?

Given the average age of our volunteers and the tenuous health of some of our guests, we decided we should have a defibrillator on site in case of an emergency. We have since had three training sessions led by Jen Wilson of Vital Education and can report that over thirty of our volunteers are now trained in CPR and the use of the defibrillator. Hopefully, we will never need to use it.



Once again, we are delighted when the back doorbell rings and we are greeted by the smiling faces of local gardeners and farmers bearing gifts of fresh produce. Tomatoes, sweet corn, squash, etc., either are used by our talented cooks or handed out to happy guests. Kathleen is still pondering just how she can use this amazing head of cabbage. Cole slaw, colcannon, lots of possibilities!!



Our volunteers do a lot more than just cook and hand out food. We get visited several times a year by Public Health who check us out for everything from mold to insects to the temperatures of our meatloaves. We pay a cleaning crew to come in and mop on a daily basis, but our hard-working volunteers do a fair share of the deep cleaning of the shelving, the freezer, the walk-in and free standing refrigerators, and the sinks.



The Sunday Crew has their own version of a library. They collect adult and children's books and give them away to guests.

And the Friday Crew models their new tee shirts that celebrate how much they enjoy their day at DBSK.



And Finally, Summer's Almost Over...

And although it's only August, Christmas is only four months away, and we are already beginning to think about our annual Knapsack Giveaway. Once again we will be filling knapsacks as gifts for the men, women, and children whom we see at Daily Bread. We will purchase the knapsacks and ask for your help with donations of items for surviving a cold Champaign winter, such as hats, gloves, scarves, socks, hand warmers, and toiletries. For many of our guests, these knapsacks will be the only present they receive over the holidays. We will have more information about the Knapsack Giveaway in the next newsletter, but, as we all know, it's never too early to start on Christmas shopping!

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Please Join Us at Empty Bowls
(sponsored by Champaign-Urbana Potters Club
And Daily Bread Soup Kitchen)

October 8, 2025 3:00-5:30
Silvercreek Restaurant

Pick out your favorite ceramic bowl
created by local artists
and enjoy a hearty bowl of soup.
\$25 adult/\$10 child

All proceeds will help
Daily Bread
Keep our bowls
(and plates) full.



