



Soup Scoop 55 November, 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.

“The Heart of It All Remains the Same, People Helping People, One Steaming Bowl at a Time.”

Our longtime Soup Scoop writer was frustrated, trying to write the 55th DBSK newsletter. She was trying to think of a new way to tell the story of Daily Bread, and, (since both our numbers of meals served and our expenses, are going up,) trying to think of a new way to encourage our supporters to be generous this Christmas. But she kept drawing a blank. “Hmm,” suggested her daughter, “maybe you should try ChatGPT?” Well, at age 77, AI and ChatGPT weren’t in her computer skillset, but it might be worth a try.

So she did, with some help from her daughter. And, less than a minute later, this was the result.

A Brief (and Slightly Silly) History of Soup Kitchens (by ChatGPT)

Long, long ago — like, medieval long ago, people realized two things: (1) Hunger makes humans cranky. (2) Boiling random things in a pot somehow makes them edible. Thus, the first “proto-soup kitchen” was born — a giant cauldron in a village square, filled with mystery vegetables, questionable meat, and the occasional accidental spoon.

Fast-forward to the 18th century. Monks and churches began feeding the poor — mostly to be nice, but also because they were tired of people fainting during long sermons. The soup was simple: water, salt, and something vaguely resembling a carrot. Patrons didn’t complain, because they were too polite (and too hungry).

Then came the Great Depression (aka The Golden Age of Soup). Soup kitchens exploded across America. Lines wrapped around blocks, ladles worked overtime, and tomato soup became the Beyoncé of broth. (Fun fact: Most soup kitchen workers developed the wrist strength of professional tennis players from all that ladling.)

Modern times. Today, soup kitchens are community legends — powered by volunteers, compassion, and an unspoken rule that someone will make a giant pot of chili no one asked for. They’ve evolved with the times: vegan soups, gluten-free soups, “artisan” soups that cost \$12 (we see you, hipsters), but the heart of it all remains the same — people helping people, one steaming bowl at a time.

Moral of the story: Soup kitchens prove that no matter the century, humanity’s greatest invention isn’t the wheel, electricity, or the internet — it’s soup. Because soup means hope (and occasionally noodles).



“Hunger Makes People Cranky.”

Wow! In less than a minute, ChatGPT managed to create an article that was both humorous and heartfelt. And at least somewhat accurate. (We would like to think that there are no mystery vegetables or questionable meats in our pots, although we did discover just last week that a missing spoon was responsible for the malfunction of our garbage disposal.) Whoever or whatever writes the words for ChatGPT, be it an electrical spark of creativity, a magical genie in a lamp, or a holy spirit, he/she/it is amazing! Wherever the words emerge from, be it ‘the cloud’ (where resides all of our photos, data, etc.), a super-super computer, or behind a curtain in the land of Oz, it’s amazing. It’s amazing that Artificial Intelligence could be intelligent enough to recognize and incorporate the human emotions of compassion, of dedication, of love, and of hope.

All of our volunteers would have to agree that many of our guests show up at Daily Bread cranky, but that most, after eating one of our hot meals, leave with smiles on their faces. Most say ‘Thank you’ when they get their plates and their drinks. It’s the satisfaction of offering someone food and seeing his or her pleasure and enjoyment of what was offered that keep our volunteers coming back week after week.

The moral of ChatGPT’s story is the same moral principal that is reflected in our mission statement. ChatGPT ends its story with the words *‘because soup means hope.’* We conclude our mission statement with the words *‘We provide a safe, respectful, and inviting environment in an atmosphere of hope and dignity.’* Hope is the message we share. Hope is what we try to give our guests.

A Brief End of the Year Report



It’s been a busy, busy, busy year at Daily Bread. The number of guests we are serving has continued to climb. Most days we served around 450 hot meals to hungry guests. We also hand out around 400 sack lunches for guests to take home for an evening meal as well. That adds up to 221,336 meals through September of this year. We have served over 500 meals numerous times. One incredible day 601 guests ate with us. The last few got hot dogs, but no one went home hungry. In fact, no one has ever gone home without a meal.

We continue to be a totally volunteer run organization (with the exception of paying a cleaning crew to do heavy cleaning—our volunteers tend to be on the older side!), so these numbers put a lot of pressure on our cooks and the rest of our volunteers.

Our expenses are going up as well. The large number of meals, the fact that the Foodbank is having less donations available, the fact that food costs in general are going up means that we are having to spend more and more to provide our guests with tasty, nutritious meals. And we continue to operate with only local donations; we receive no government funding.

But we continue to serve meals seven days a week, 363 days a year. We do our very best to continue to ‘provide a safe, respectful, and inviting environment.’ We offer a filling meal, conversation, encouragement, hope, and even sometimes shoe tying!

Some Welcome Gifts from our Friends

Thanks to Black Dog Smoke and Ale House



Mike Cochran, co-owner of Black Dog Smoke and Ale House, got word that his popular downtown Champaign restaurant was on fire shortly after noon on Tuesday, September 5 as he was driving back to Champaign from Chicago. He quickly hit the gas pedal and then called Daily Bread. "Could you," he wondered, "use the meat that's in our freezers. Our electricity is out and I don't want the meat to go to waste."

It was because of the generosity of Mike Cochran and his partner Pedro Heller that our guests had beef brisket for lunch the next day! And it was that generosity that enabled us to serve our guests ribs, pulled pork sandwiches, pork roast, rib tips, etc. over the next several weeks. One of our guests told us that his pulled pork sandwich was the "best sandwich I have ever eaten!" It was probably the most exciting weeks of meals that our guests have ever experienced.



We are happy to note that Black Dog was up and running within a few weeks and we would be happy to encourage everyone to try out that superior pulled pork sandwich. Black Dog has been a friend to Daily Bread since it moved to Champaign. To the delight of our guests (and our cooks) we frequently have received unsold items. They've been a true community friend.

Thanks to Sundowners Car Club

All that barbeque wasn't the only welcome gift we received at Daily Bread in September. Karen Pickard, coordinator of our Speakers' Bureau, had talked to the Sundowners Car Club earlier this summer, and they invited her back to present her with a very generous check, for which we are very grateful and which we will use wisely and well!

Also, for your information, if any organization is in need of a speaker and would like to learn more about Daily Bread, please email Karen at kkpickard@gmail.com



Thanks to CU Potters Club and Empty Bowls



The CU Potters Club staged an Empty Bowls Benefit on October 8 with all proceeds going to Daily Bread. Local potters donated over 500 original hand-crafted bowls. Silvercreek Restaurant in Urbana donated the setting and bowls of soup with bread. (Their tomato basil soup is amazing! We would encourage everyone to try out Silvercreek as well as Black Dog!!). The event was a smashing success. Silvercreek briefly ran out of the tomato soup, but quickly refilled the pots. The Potters Club almost ran out of bowls, but an extra box was discovered at the last minute. A record crowd showed up, smiling broadly, and delighted that Empty Bowls was back. And Daily Bread was delighted to receive a donation of \$10,000 from the benefit that will fill a lot of empty bowls!



Thanks to the talented potters: Chris Berti, Laura Billimack, (Pottery Place), Julie Birdwell, Nancy Boise, Tom Brewer, Joelle Busby, Sophia Byrne, Clive Charlwood, Chao-Wen Chen, Megan Conaster (Hedgerow Pottery), Seth Condon, Laura Crevling, Cathy Cunningham, Tracy Cunningham, Alida De Flamingh, John D'ella, Tracy Edwards, Kristi Emilsson, Patrick Enstrom (Bad Bear Pottery), Stephen Flager, Linda Flowers, Colleen Freund, Pat Guthrie, Mike Heiniger, Laura Irle, Hiroko Ito, Eunjoo Kang, Rashmi Kapoor, Sharon Kerlin, Roger Kirkwood, Robin Lewis, Ingrid Melief, Carly Morrison Clay, Jen Mui, Trucie Nguyen, Valerie O'Brien, Laura

O'Donnell, Deb Paul, Mike Philpot, Amy Plambeck, Bev Rauchfus, Ursula Reuter-Carlson, Betty Sagovac, Joshua Schutz, Carol Spindell, Al Tindle, Alyssa VanMeter, Jia Wang, Emmilee Whittington, Lexie Williams, Irene Wu, Liza Wynett (Bewitching Bestiary), Champaign Urbana Potter's Club, Parkland College Ceramic Department

Thanks to Walgreens

On a recent Tuesday Jim Dobbins, our hard-working Assistance Chairman, arranged for a crew from Walgreens to come to Daily Bread and give flu shots to any of our guests who wanted one. We can't tell you that there was a mad rush to get the shots, but the guests who decided to 'take the plunge' were delighted not to have to make an appointment or to have to find their way to a local Walgreens.



Thanks to Walgreens for making the shots available and helping to keep our guests healthy this upcoming winter.

Christmas Knapsack Project



For thirteen years, we have handed out generously filled backpacks to the men and women who are our guests at lunch. The men and women we see daily are rarely remembered at Christmas. For many, these backpacks were their only presents. There were always lots of smiles on Backpack Day at the soup kitchen. Sadly, due to the arrival of COVID in 2020, we had to change our Christmas Backpack Give-Away. Beginning in December of 2020 we have handed out red knapsacks to women, green to men, and polka-dotted and striped knapsacks to children, all filled with toiletries and hats, scarves, socks, and gloves, essential items for surviving a Champaign winter. The giveaway is a festive holiday surprise

for our guests; about 800 knapsacks have been distributed every year.

We plan to hand out knapsacks from the Annex, the building just south of the soup kitchen, the week before Christmas. Once again, we are asking for your help to fill the knapsacks. Donations of toiletries such as deodorant, hand lotion for hands chapped by the cold, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, shaving cream, razors, ChapStick, soap, etc. are needed. We want to add cold weather items such as warm gloves (no small thin gloves, please), hats, socks, and scarves. We would like to also include a small treat such as candy bars, chips, etc. Since the knapsacks are a Christmas gift, all items should be new. We have purchased heavy duty knapsacks. If you are interested in filling knapsacks, we can give you a list of items and give you knapsacks to fill. If you are interested in donating items, we have volunteers who are very skilled at knapsack filling.



We hope to collect all that we need from December 1 through Dec. 12. Items can be dropped off at Daily Bread, 116 N. First Street, Champaign, from 9 a.m. to 12 P.M. every day. Please use the back door on the alley when dropping off items or drop them off at the back door of the Annex. Donations can also be dropped off at Ellen Harms' (705 S. Elm Blvd., 217-356-2551) at Pam Hagle's (713 S. Elm Blvd., 217-359-3245) or at Ruth Ann Evans' (4414 Crossgate Dr., 217-398-5687). Tax forms will be available. Because we always panic that we aren't going to have enough donations—and then they always show up at the last minute—the earlier the better!

We are extremely grateful to everyone who participated in last year's Knapsack Giveaway. Thank you for bringing some of the joy and magic of the season to the guests at Daily Bread Soup Kitchen.

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



Ode to Daily Bread
(to the tune of Edelweiss)
Written by Ellen McDowell

Daily Bread, Daily Bread,
Seven days a week
You can eat there.

The foods divine
For guests in line.
Volunteers happy to be here.

Friendship and food
May it bloom and grow,
Bloom and grow forever.

Daily Bread, Daily Bread,
Bless our Soup Kitchen
Forever.