Soup Scoop 58
November, 2026

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.

"Holidays are not always festive.
Some people's hardest days happen when everyone else is smiling."
M. Ristic

Champaign-Urbana is days away from Thanksgiving and weeks away from Christmas. Many of you who support Daily Bread Soup Kitchen are beginning to feel that holiday spirit. You are checking cookbooks for a perfect turkey recipe or chasing squirrels away from the pumpkins decorating your front porches. You are untangling strands of lights and climbing up ladders to drape blinking lights around the eaves. You are choosing gifts from the many catalogues that fill your mailboxes and ordering wreaths from the Boy Scouts who knock on your doors. You are humming merry tunes, hanging up stockings by the fireplace, and helping your children and grandchildren write letters to Santa. For many of you, it's "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!"

For many people all the blinking holiday lights and music coming from all around are happy reminders of the joys ahead. But for other people, like the people we see every day at the soup kitchen, those blinking lights and happy sounds are a reminder of what a less than happy day awaits. Many of our guests don't have a door to hang a wreath, much less a mantel to hang a stocking. Many of our guests, in fact, are grateful for a pair of socks! Many of our guests don't have the money to buy a turkey or an oven to cook a turkey in. Many of our guests use our address as a mailing address, and we've certainly not noticed a glut of holiday catalogues showing up.



Holidays are not festive times for many of our guests. A guest once told a volunteer how difficult Christmas was for her when her children wanted to write letters to Santa. "What do I tell them," she wondered, "when they ask Santa for an X Box or Barbie's Dream House or an I-Pad. They tell me that their friends at school get presents like that. We sure don't."

These are dark days for many of the guests who we see every day. Our numbers keep rising. We are feeding over 450 guests many days. Food prices are high. Electric bills are high. Gas prices are high. SNAP programs that help many of our guests have been sharply cut.

We are very grateful for the support that so many of you have provided for Daily Bread's mission of feeding the hungry of our CU community. Without your continuing support we would not be able to meet the increasing demand we are seeing. We want to thank you for your support and wish you all the very happiest of holiday greetings. We hope that you are singing "Have a Holly, Jolly Christmas" as you bake cookies, decorate your tree, wrap gifts, and enjoy this wonderful season, but don't forget that there are people, too many people, in our community who are singing "I'll have a Blue Christmas…". if they are singing anything at all.

Help Us Spread Some Christmas Cheer!
Daily Bread Knapsack Project

At Daily Bread we do what we can to bring some of the holiday joy to our guests. We decorate our tables with pumpkins or Christmas flowers. We fill the room with Christmas music. We prepare a Thanksgiving Eve and a Christmas Eve feast with turkey and all the trimmings. Santa sometimes drops by unexpectedly. We offer stamped Christmas cards for our guests to send to family. Our cooks bake sugar cookies. And every year we give our guests a present of a well stuffed knapsack. Here's how you can help make Christmas a bit merrier for the guests we see every day.



Every year at Christmas we give out knapsacks to our guests. The men and women we see daily are rarely remembered at Christmas. For many of our guests these knapsacks are their only Christmas gifts. We purchase red knapsacks for women, green knapsacks for men, and brightly decorated knapsacks for children, and we stuff them with items that help guests deal with a cold, Champaign winter. All the knapsacks contain a plastic bag filled with toiletries as well as a warm hat, thick winter gloves, a scarf, and several pairs of socks. We try to add a food item and a small gift as well. Children's packs include stuffed animals and other fun items.

Last year we filled out and gave away over 800 knapsacks. There were lots of smiles on our Knapsack Giveaway Days.

There are two main ways that you can help with this Daily Bread Project. We are hoping that you can help us with donations 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, and soap are needed. We also want to add cold weather items, such as warm gloves, (no small thin gloves please), hats, scarves, and heavy socks. (If you've heard the Bomba Socks commercial where they advertise that they donate a pair of socks for every pair sold, we can attest that it's true. We get a very generous donation of Bomba socks every year which we add to the knapsacks. But we also like to include one pair of heavy-duty socks for the cold, snowy days.) We would also appreciate donations of small treats such as candy bars, chips, etc. Since the knapsacks are a Christmas gift, all items should be new. If you are interested in donating items, we have volunteers who are very skilled at knapsack filling!



Another way that you can help is filling knapsacks yourself. We can give you empty knapsacks and a list of items and you (and friends, children, grandkids, book club, social club, etc., etc.) can fill them yourselves. I guarantee, it will be a festive occasion!

We will be accepting donations from **Monday, November 30 through Friday, December 11**. Items can be dropped off at Daily Bread at 116 North First Street, Champaign. Please use the back door on the alley when dropping off items. Donations can also be dropped off at Ellen Harms' (705 S. Elm Blvd., 217-493-5536) 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 very grateful for your help with this project.

Blessed Be the Children at Christmas…



Not every guest we serve at the soup kitchen is homeless. We serve a hot meal to anyone who shows up at our door. We serve senior citizens who love our coffee, our desserts, and a conversation with a volunteer. We serve guests who are marginally employed and stop by on a lunch hour. Saving on a meal means there is more money for gas or a power bill. We serve men, women, and we serve children, quite a lot of children. The Eastern Illinois Foodbank states that one in six children in our area faces food insecurity. Those are the children we see every day.

But those are not all of the children we see at Daily Bread. We also see children who have heard about the soup kitchen and want to help. We have a policy that children must be 16 or older to volunteer when guests are present, but many children have found other ways to help feed the hungry of CU.



Every Tuesday three eighth graders from Holy Cross School arrive to help make sandwiches, take down chairs, bag up chips or cookies for sack lunches, and do whatever needs doing. They come for two hours, are extremely helpful, and enjoy helping us feed the hungry of our community, as well as getting to miss two hours of class and receiving service hours. Every Wednesday three eighth graders from St. Matthew School show up to help in the same way.





The children of our community are generous in other ways. They help us raise money. Izzy, Emmaline, and Anastasia held a lemonade stand this summer for Izzy's birthday and gave all the proceeds to the soup kitchen. I hope they know that our guests LOVE lemonade and that their donation will help keep our lemonade jugs full.



Cora is a Girl Scout, and she donated Girl Scout cookies for the guests at the Daily Bread. Our guests LOVE Girl Scout cookies as much as they enjoy lemonade.



Another thing that the guests at the soup kitchen enjoy is getting their sack lunches in a bag that has been specially decorated for them. We like to take white bags when we talk to classrooms, scout troops, and other groups of children. The kids enjoy decorating the bags, and our guests enjoy receiving them. We've heard a rumor that one of our guests has kept every decorated bag she has received and that she has quite the collection!

We are very grateful for all of our supporters—especially the younger ones!!

Lots of Partners in the Fight Against Hunger
(Or: You Meet the Best People at the Foodbank!)

Daily Bread is not the only entity that is aware of hunger, especially childhood hunger, in our community. And we are not the only group that is working to help feed those children who make up that one in six facing food insecurity today. At Daily Bread we are grateful to be part of a community wide effort to reduce hunger in our community.

Many of you probably know that both **Champaign Unit 4** and **Urbana School District 116** provide **FREE** breakfast and lunch to ALL kindergarten-eighth grade students every day. Urbana high school students receive free lunches as well. These programs are funded through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program called the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and ensure that no CU student is hungry at school.



One of the difficult problems when it comes to fighting hunger is that feeding a person one day doesn't make them less hungry the next morning. All those kids who get a nice, hot lunch Monday through Friday may have nothing to eat over the weekend. That's where a local group called **Feeding Our Kids** comes in! Daily Bread has volunteers who go to Eastern Illinois Foodbank four days a week. Our Tuesday volunteers at the foodbank noticed that there was always a group of women handing out colorful containers to other volunteers. Curious, we asked who they were and what was in those containers. That's how we first learned about **Feeding Our Kids**.

Founded in 2013 by two local mothers who were concerned that kids at Westview and Robeson were going home hungry, the women began by filling bags of non-perishable food for kids at their schools to take home every weekend. The program has since grown to support more than 1,600 kids in over 49 schools and childhood programs across Champaign County. Students are identified by school social workers and given bags of nutritious food to take home on weekends and holidays.

Feeding Our Kids runs through the generosity of its many volunteers and is funded through local donations and fundraisers. Food is purchased in bulk from Eastern Illinois Foodbank and Sam's Club. For more information about this amazing program, check out their website: feedingourkids.org



There are quite a number of food pantries in our community, many of which can be found by a simple Google search. We found one of our favorites at the Eastern Illinois Foodbank on Tuesday. Frequently we would watch this woman filling every inch of her car up with a wide variety of foods. Finally, we asked her where the food was going. Andrea Miller coordinates the **Garden Hills School Food Pantry.** They are open two days a month and are sponsored by McKinley Memorial Presbyterian Church.



Lastly, we want to salute the **Salvation Army**. They have a wonderful food pantry that helps many CU residents. But they also have a wonderful annual **Toy Shop** every year that lets moms shop for free for gifts for their children. Thanks to the Salvation Army, thousands of CU kids will have a happier Christmas. They may not find X boxes or I-pads, but they will definitely find gifts picked out especially for them. BTW, toy donations are happily accepted.

It's Thanksgiving—Time to Say Thanks!

As we have said over and over, we couldn't do what we do without the incredible generosity of our community. So, thank you for your continual support of the soup kitchen. It's the individual checks, big and small, that keep our doors open, our pots bubbling, and the hungry of our community fed.

In August we were delighted to receive a generous check from the **United Way** in support of our Assistance Program. We work in partnership with United Way in providing bus passes to guests without any means of transportation. Last year we were able to give out over 300 passes to our guests. Providing a hungry guest, a meal only solves the problems briefly before their stomachs start growling again; giving a bus pass provides transportation for a year.

In October we were delighted to get a generous check form **Elks Lodge 2497**, the proceeds from a bingo night fundraiser. (We LOVE fundraisers in which other people do the work!)





We also received a most welcome donation in September after a crew spent over a week repairing the street in front of the soup kitchen. Quite a few of the workmen observed what was happening at Daily Bread and joined us for lunch. Later we got a very nice check from the owner of the crew who apologized for any disruption caused by the job and thanked us for feeding his crew.



In October we were delighted to be visited by a group of **ClarkLindsey** residents who had listened to a soup kitchen presentation by Karen Pickard and wanted to see our operation for themselves. Well, they were impressed (One even commented that 'our meatloaf was better than ClarkLindseys!'). And they left a generous tip on the table!

Special thanks also to the residents of Elm Blvd, long-time home of Daily Bread's own Ellen McDowell, who gathered for their annual coffee and donuts on the Boulevard and collected a very generous donation for Daily Bread.

We especially want to thank the **CU Potters Club** and **Common Ground Food Co-op** for sponsoring an **Empty Bowls Benefit** with all the proceeds going to Daily Bread. This year's event was held at Lincoln Square. Forty potters donated almost 400 bowls, the Pottery Place held a Paint Your Own Bowl event, a local potter demonstrated on a pottery wheel, and a grand time was had by all. Empty Bowls is an international movement that has raised millions of dollars toward the fight against hunger. Artists create bowls to remind people of the empty bowls in their community. We are incredibly grateful to the CU Potters Club and local potters for their generosity and support of our mission. It is thanks to groups like the Potters club that we are able to keep our plates and soup bowls filled.



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Merry Christmas From Our Kitchen To Yours!