

Subject: House of Sufism (Boston) Brunch Update April 2014
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Brunch Update

House of Sufism Charity Initiative
*Addressing the most pressing needs of our
community*

House of Sufism (KH)
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HAPPENINGS

This past month, we have continued to serve the hungry and homeless people of Boston with our love, food, and companionship. Volunteers at our Sunday Brunch provided delicious meals, with everything from lasagna to Danish pastries to scrambled eggs. We thank everyone who contributed to these efforts and we invite all to join!

This edition of Brunch Update is particularly special because Dr. Alireza Nurbakhsh, Master of the Nimatullahi Sufi Order, has authorized us to publish for the first time ever an excerpt from a speech he gave last December in Los Angeles at *dig jush*, the worldwide gathering of this Sufi order. We hope these words provide all with a richer perspective on the value of service:

"Sufism is a school of love, and anyone who becomes a Sufi tries to acquire the love for everyone and everything in this school. Love exists in all of us, in some due to their upbringing and environment it's more than others'. The whole point of the Nimatullahi order and the *khanaqahs* across the world is to cultivate and reinforce love in Sufis, and one of

"Samples of what we served"



Homemade Lentil and Barley Soup



Linguine with a slow-cooked meat sauce

How to Get Involved

the most effective ways to do so is through service to others. When one serves others and makes others happy, he or she will nourish and reinforce the power of love in himself or herself fortuitously. The more one serves, the more loving one becomes."



REFLECTIONS OF A VOLUNTEER

Of the many pressing needs of our community, one I find particularly disturbing is youth homelessness. As a man in his early twenties, I get chills imagining how different my life could have been: no parents to make sure I do my homework; no breakfast on the table; no movie night with friends; no guaranteed warmth; no guaranteed safety. The foundation of my childhood was the loving support of my family - and the safe comfort of my family's home. It's hard to imagine life without them.

That's why I was so shocked when I began researching statistics on youth homelessness. According to a recent report



from the Executive Office of the Governor, there are approximately 1.7 million in the United States youth who are homeless. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

(ESE) estimates there are up to 6,000 unaccompanied

1. Volunteer! It is a time commitment of only two hours: 2-4 PM on Sundays. Help us cook and clean or just spend time with our friends!

2. Monetary donations: If you would like to make contribution to House of Sufism Charity Initiative, you can write a check (payable to KN), use any credit card, or wire money through PayPal. All your donations are tax-deductible.

If you would like to make a donation, you can mail a check to KNP and include the word "charity" in the space for a memo (our mailing address is 84 Pembroke St., Boston MA 02118), or you can send us money via PayPal (once again, our e-mail address is nimatullahisufiorder@gmail.com) and use the link listed below.



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homeless youth in the state and over 44,000 students of all ages experiencing homelessness enrolled in Massachusetts Public Schools. How incredible is the human habit of seeing what we want to see! Prior to this research, the face of homelessness in my mind was a bearded man pushing a shopping cart and living under a bridge. But homelessness - especially for youth - is far more hidden and insidious than I had believed.

The Governor's report shares some poignant interviews that bring us, just temporarily, into the lives of these young people. Among the most moving for me were the following:

"I didn't really have a choice. My parents said I was no longer welcome in their house so I didn't have a home anymore... It was pretty simple, y'know?"

"I became homeless because I was beat by my father when I was younger, like all my life. My mother and father split up and so I stayed with her and all her boyfriends. And when I was 15 turning 16 her boyfriend said I could no longer be in the house."

In a report by "Voices of Families," the mother of a 10-year-old shared these reflections about being temporarily housed in a motel through a shelter program:

"If we could have avoided being homeless my son would have had stability. He feels a lot of let downs, like having friends, and losing them, because we have to be moving around. You don't have control where you are placed. It's hard to explain rules to kids, like not being able to go to his friend's house, not being able to go out when we want to, to have to sign in and out."³



These quotes touched me because they demonstrate the shame, isolation, violence, and lack of control that must take a heavy toll on the psychological and even physical wellbeing of these young people, who -

just like me a few years ago - desire the basic love, comfort, and safety that all children should enjoy. And of course, homeless youth don't just disappear; statistics show they are highly likely to become homeless adults if no intervention occurs.

We can play a role in that intervention. Through service and lovingkindness, we can change the course of people's lives. If the House of Sufism's mission is to serve the most pressing needs of our communities, part of that effort must be serving the thousands of homeless youth in Massachusetts. Over the next months, I will investigate the issue of youth homelessness even further through research and reaching out to youth shelters and charity organizations. I want to find how the food, love, conversation, and support that we bring to adults living in shelters can be channeled toward the vulnerable youth of our community.

Now: close your eyes. Imagine yourself as a teenager, but colder, lonelier, hungrier, and terrified. It's night and you can't sleep. Despite prior disappointments, you let yourself dream that someone - anyone - will appear and give you unconditional support. We can bring that love.



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