

Brunch Update

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House of Sufism Charity Initiative

Addressing the most pressing needs of our community



Happenings

This month, the Boston community received some sobering news. On the afternoon of October 8, the long-neglected bridge connecting Boston's Long Island to the mainland was deemed unsafe and the island evacuated. According to the Boston Public Health Commission, the Long Island Shelter averaged about 440 guests per night and 250-300 people received mental health and addiction treatment services there as well. Between 220 and 250 were temporarily relocated to the South End Fitness Center, others have found temporary homes at other shelters, and no doubt some are back on the street just as the weather is turning cold. The City of Boston has requested our help in collecting clothes to soften the

impact that this event will have on the homeless community.

In happier news, House of Sufism volunteers have taken up the task of providing Halloween costumes to children at Casa Myrna, Boston's domestic violence shelter, per their request. With these donations, children burdened with a difficult home life will have the opportunity to experience the pure joy of being a kid on Halloween.



Love and Service [part 3 of 3]

The Sufi path shows that it is important to make service a life-long practice. It is best not to make it a temporary activity, like many people do. In order to be physically healthy, one should eat well always not just during a week or two of dieting. Just like people diet to lose weight, only to regain many unhealthy pounds right after, so the same principle applies in service. In order to be spiritually healthy, one must make service a habit. It's important, too, to note that we do not advocate an extreme kind of lifestyle. Not everyone can make service their full-time job. The Bible's Book of Ephesians discusses this wisdom well:

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love:

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." (Ephesians 4:1-4)

Each has to fulfill his function on Earth, whatever that vocation may be. By serving others through those vocations, we can grow to love one another and perhaps to truly know that "there is one body, and one Spirit".



“We recognize and value the vital role that your generosity plays in allowing us to continue serving the community.”

— **East End House**, social service center in Cambridge where we donate food

REFLECTIONS OF A VOLUNTEER

For the longest time I have thought about the meaning of 'purpose' and how it enters, encapsulates and breathes meaning into life itself. Having grown up in Pakistan, I have witnessed the resilience of people and also how the struggle for dignity, happiness and prosperity blurred out the state of poverty, injustice, extremism and corruption. Sacredness can manifest itself in every nook and cranny of our lives and actions – it doesn't require one to just be physically in prostration. On the Sufi path both meditation and service together become expressions of the sacred. Service, which inherently requires one to surrender and detach the ego, is a strong expression of love. There is neither prescription nor checklist as there are so many ways to contribute. So much so, that Rumi writes,

“Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are thousand ways to kneel and kiss the earth.”

Whether it is preparing a meal for others, holding someone's hand during troubled times, listening with sincerity to another's dreams or challenges, allowing for creative expression or just being present, any action can be an embodiment of love.



More Reflections of a Volunteer

Entering into a new situation always presents one with the opportunity to be an outsider. What does it mean to be an outsider? Feeling uncomfortable, maybe unwelcome, observed with a judgemental eye or ignored altogether. Without a doubt, everyone who finds themselves in the position of homelessness has experienced the feeling of being an outsider. Whether it was this perceived “otherness” that caused them to end up on the street in the first place, such as the disquieting trend of LGBT youth displaced from their homes by intolerant families, or an otherness created by a society that dehumanizes and ignores the homeless members of our community.

Volunteering at Bridge was an interesting circumstance in which the position of outsidership was switched. The youth who live at the shelter have formed a community, based on common interests and shared experiences, but also out of a collective feeling of outsidership that can create an unusually strong bond. Maybe their support systems have crumbled, but they have managed to build their own community.

Coming into that situation as a volunteer, you are definitely aware of your status as an outsider. The highest goal of volunteering is to bridge that gap through time, empathy, and a concerted effort to reach out. A meal, in addition to being physically and mentally nourishing, is a shorthand for community, often a cornerstone of family relationships. Although we can create a space for community to flourish through food, entering into that space can be difficult, especially with the added barrier of server/served.

I have no doubt that given time, we as volunteers can shed the burden of outsidership and learn to participate in their community. Their gratitude feels like an invitation, the beginnings of a mutual respect that transcends social barriers.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED



1. **Volunteer!** Sunday Brunch is a time commitment of only a few hours. Help us cook and clean or just spend time with our friends in need! Also, we need volunteers throughout the week to pick up donations from bakeries and deliver them to food pantries the next day.

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

3. **In-kind donations:** We are always in need for milk, eggs, fruit, plastic bags, etc. for our Sunday Brunch. **We are currently holding an Emergency Clothing Drive.** All donations are tax-deductible.

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