

July Brunch Update



What Happened in July

Our volunteers have had to contend with some very serious heat over the last month, with the temperature having gone well past ninety degrees fahrenheit on a number of days in July. That didn't slow our volunteers down, though. At least twenty different people came to serve over the course of the month of July, and with this variety of people came a variety of food. On the first Sunday of the month, one of our volunteers contributed chicken salad as a main course, on the second, the main course was spaghetti and meatballs, on the third it was Lebanese-style stuffed peppers, and one of our volunteers made taco salad for the last main course of the month. Pastry, fruit, and salad accompanied these various main dishes each week. After sharing a buffet brunch with the friends who came down to the shelter's common area, some of our volunteers made plates of leftovers, which they delivered by hand to those friends of our who could not join us in the common room. After delivering food to the residents of the shelter where we serve our brunch, volunteers also delivered large amounts of baked goods to other shelters in the area each week.

In addition to serving food to the residents of the shelter we serve, we consider the attempt to befriend them a central feature of our service. Developing these friendships is certainly a goal in its own right, as it helps us fight loneliness and social isolation, but it also serves as an important tool, since we use those growing friendships as a means of personalizing our service. To use some examples from July, we knew to set some extra milk aside for one of our friends, who was under the weather and we have been able to help some of our friends who are concerned about their health by getting them gym memberships. The commitment to helping that these friendships reinforce is not a one-way street, though—our friends help us, too. For example, this month, one of the residents made sure to save a parking space for us, and we arrived to find this friend waiting for us in front of the residence.

Some of the following remarks might help illustrate the impact this service has on both those who perform it and those who receive it. One volunteer said, "At charity, I feel I'm an apprentice of humanity." Another called brunch service "an experience of a better world." One of our friends told us, "You're here to help. Anytime, day or night, no question is too small, no problem is too big for you guys, and you do everything with smile!"

Essay

What is the purpose of charitable service?

Human beings have provided various answers to this question.

From some religions' points of view, we perform charity in order to please God in order secure our worldly pleasures, lodging, and jobs; have Him keep us away from suffering; and secure a place in the Heavens for us *in return* for our service.

From an egoistic point of view, one may perform charity in order to gain something in return: a good reputation, money, a political position, or at least self-satisfaction.

We hold respect for all forms of charity, as they can be a means of attracting the grace of the Friend.

However, even further, from the point of view of some especially nihilistic philosophies, there is no point in charity. According to their particular account of rational self-interest, serving others only keeps us away from our own pleasures. This vision of the intellect places the self and "my interest" first, with the needs of others coming in a distant second place.

From the Sufi point of view, though, love of God is the purpose, meaning, and foundation of service. Thus, in Sufism, charity springs from a different intention: "...the purpose of being in this world for us is nothing than to be kind, compassionate, and loving to each other." However, since the Truth is transcendent and intangible, we try to love, understand and serve others (human beings and animals) that are manifestations of the Divine. We aim to address "the most pressing needs of our community" with our service. We think globally and act locally. Therefore, in our charitable efforts, we give priority to our own family, neighbors, friends, fellow residents of our city, and fellow Americans.

Charity is the most direct and meaningful way to embrace and experience Love, and in such a troubled world, where it often seems that our intellect can't tell us the meaning of life, couldn't we all use a little more Love?



How to get involved:

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 a contribution to the House of Sufism Charity Initiative, you can write a check (payable to KN), use any credit card, or wire money through PayPal. All your contributions are tax-deductible.

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