



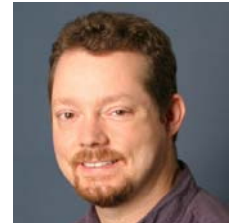
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Connections

The newsletter of the Connection Café

Comments from the Coordinator

Several years ago I read a commentary by an individual who worked at a homeless shelter. The author shared his reflections on how it was easy being kind to the “deserving poor,” to those who are thankful and respectful, to those we deem as deserving. He also discussed the difficulty of reaching out to those who “didn’t deserve it.” He was convinced that it is just as important, albeit more difficult, to reach out to those who act as if what he was giving, “he owed them.” It is just as important to be cheerful and respectful to those who didn’t say “thank you” or those who didn’t seem to need the assistance. In theory it made sense to me, we are all God’s children and we are all deserving of respect.



At The Connection Café the theory becomes reality. It is with this attitude that we come each day to serve the “deserving” and the “undeserving”. It is with this attitude that we treat each person as a guest. When I speak to groups about The Connection Café, I often share stories of those who meet societies standards of “the deserving poor,” those who have a disability or are elderly. I talk about people who are trying to get their lives on track, about people who are thankful and respectful, and about people who offer to help clean-up or help out in some other way. (People like Jerry Patton who is “the guest at our table” later in this newsletter.) I also share stories about “the undeserving poor.” The grumpy, the self-centered, the downright disrespectful. The guests who fit this description are some of our most difficult guests, yet they are also some of my favorite guests, because they challenge me to follow the words of Mother Teresa and look at them as “Jesus in distressing disguise.” It is not always easy, but it is what we are called to do! There are no “undeserving” guests at our table. Some of our guests don’t really need the food that we are serving, they need the interaction with others and the respect that we attempt to show them. These are some of the people who are most in need of The Connection Café. They are the reason we follow Jesus’ call to, “go the extra mile.” We do so, out of love!

The Guests at our Table

“Can I help with something?” This is a common phrase heard from Jerry Patton, one of our guests at the Connection Café. Jerry is always willing to help in whatever way is needed. Whether he is stacking chairs, pouring juice or taking out the garbage he does so with a toothless smile and his distinctive laugh. Jerry rides the DART bus system every day. He knows the bus routes and the drivers and we often turn to him when other guests have bus route questions. Jerry works at the YWCA, and he always seems to know what is going on downtown, and with many of our other guests. About a month ago Jerry let us know that a man who comes to the Café had been admitted to the hospital for heart trouble.



Recently, Jerry started asking if he could get a couple of extra lunches, when we started serving “seconds”. When we asked who they were for, he mentioned that he takes one to a security guard, and another to a guy who plays his guitar in the skywalk. That is typical of Jerry, looking out for the needs of others. He is a good friend to many of our guests, and a lot of fun to have around.

Serving Ideas

Chili, sloppy Joe’s, hot dogs or chili dogs,
Hamburger Helper, pulled pork, taco’s,
pizza or pasta
Sandwiches - roast beef, turkey, ham, egg
salad, bologna.
Sides - chips, fresh veggies, pasta salad,
potato salad, rice, fruit cups, string cheese,
pudding cups, apple sauce
Fruit - bananas are most popular, also
oranges, apples, grapes or pears
Dessert - prepackaged snack cakes,
cookies, brownies, granola bars
Drink - lemonade, coffee, milk, water
chocolate milk, fruit punch

Financial Contributions

As most of you know, the generosity of Churches, individuals, and groups is what allows us to continue to serve the hungry in our community. We have been blessed by many of you and we are so thankful. If you are able to help us with a donation during this season of almsgiving we would greatly appreciate it. Some of our supporters have decided to give monthly contributions to help with our ongoing expenses. Others give once or twice a year. However you are able to help, thank you!

How to get involved

If you would like to get involved with the Café as an individual or with a group, please call Rob at 515-771-1481 or e-mail him at theconnectioncafe@hotmail.com
You can provide, prepare and or serve meals. You can help on a one time basis or we can look into getting you on the regular schedule. You can come and serve on your lunch break or help out in some other way. We would love to have you help out and I am sure you will find you get back much more than you give!

The Connection Café is a program of The Bridge, an ecumenical effort of four Downtown Des Moines Churches
St. Ambrose Catholic, St. John’s Lutheran Church, St. Paul’s Episcopal, First United Methodist

Why we serve

We are so blessed by the many people and groups that volunteer at the Connection Café. Deacon Dave Miller heads up one such group of volunteers. The folks from St. John the Apostle Catholic Church in Norwalk, provide the meal on the second Tuesday of each month. They are known for the fresh produce they bring each month, their warm smiles and the wonderful food. I asked Deacon Miller to share with us a little bit about their experience serving at the Café.

“We here at St John the Apostle Catholic Church in Norwalk enjoy helping those that use The Connection Café. We are a variety of concerned families that believe in sharing Gods gifts with everyone. We are a caring community that wants to get involved where needed. The entire parish community shares this venture: The Knights of Columbus, The Altar and Rosary Society, Capital Fruit Co. that gives the fruit and vegetables and the entire congregation contributes to the financial support of this project. We have volunteers that prepare the meals and volunteers to serve the meals. As to the Why we do this? I suppose it’s our faith, the way we were raised by our parents and the way we live our life. The Golden Rule, to treat each other the way we would like to be treated. We excitedly look forward to the monthly experience at the Connection Café, in spite of the parking tickets.”

Deacon Dave Miller

Thank you Dave and everyone at St. John the Apostle Catholic Church.

The Connection Café Needs List

Prayers - without this nothing else matters! We can always use the following items for our day to day operations: financial donations, spoons, coffee, sugar, creamer, soft drink mix, Miracle Whip or mayonnaise, “cold” paper cups, hot cups, napkins, paper sacks, sandwich bags, 45 gallon or larger garbage bags, can opener. We also could use the following larger items; parking validation stamp, large round tables for the center, a large number of the canvas “green” grocery bags. Some of our guests ask for the following: soap, shampoo, tooth brushes, tooth paste, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, comb or hair brush, band-aids, laundry soap, bus tokens, tents, blankets or sleeping bags, candles, new socks and underwear, prayers.



The Connection Café
600 6th Ave
Des Moines, IA. 50309



Des Moines' Ecumenical Eatery