

Our Daily Bread: 34 years of serving hot meals, changing lives, and so much more



June 1 marks the 34th anniversary of the hot meal program at Our Daily Bread. This caring service of Catholic Charities has been committed since Day 1 to treating the city's poor with dignity and respect with an eye to a brighter future. The hot meal program opened its doors in 1981 and has never missed a single day. More than 7 million meals later, served over more 12 thousand consecutive days, ODB is a shining star among the programs to assist the poor and hungry in the City of Baltimore.

Sophomore service:

I led service retreats for a number of years with my John Carroll sophomores to serve the mid-day meal at Our Daily Bread and learn about the ways their programs are effecting change in the lives of their guests. It was the first time many of the young people had personal contact and conversations with men and women who were in need of food and shelter. Emphasizing the importance of treating all with dignity and compassion, my young students learned to address the guests as ma'am and sir even if they do not address their own parents and grandparents in this manner.

After serving the meal each week, my students were able to hear the witness stories of ODB employees whose lives were transformed when they themselves were guests and how they wanted to give back in gratitude as staff members. A special bond was especially forged with longtime staffer "Mr. John."



Kim of the Class of 2009, then a sophomore, worked with the adult volunteers in the kitchen preparing the plates for distribution in the dining room. (Photo: Patti Murphy Dohn)



Kristin, MK, and David of the Class of 2009 worked with Mrs. Evelyn and Mr. John distributing food and assisting the guests with beverages and good cheer in the dining room on April 20, 2007. (Photo: Patti Murphy Dohn)

One Bread-One Body-One Baltimore:

To paraphrase the postal service motto, neither sleet, nor blizzard, nor hurricane; Neither riots and unrest in the city, nor a nearby crowded papal gathering can keep the volunteers and staff of Our Daily Bread from serving those who need to be fed.... since 1981!!

Bill McCarthy, the executive director, shared with me many of the ways Catholic Charities of Baltimore is addressing the current needs of city residents in light of the recent unrest and violence:

"We are going to continue what we are currently doing. (Our) services include employment, housing, emergency services, and Head Start. Additionally, we are present in 23 public schools in West Baltimore where we provide training, behavioral health, and crisis intervention services.

"Second, we are looking to support services that are addressing immediate needs in the community. The pantry programs at St. Gregory the Great and St. Peter Claver are under great stress and the needs at St. Edward's are great. We have been meeting with pastors and staff and are developing a plan to provide consistent food delivery for pantry and dining programs and a caseworker to help people access resources, including health care, housing, employment, benefits, etc. We are going to explore other ways to help with immediate needs, such as youth programming and summer employment, for example. We will also hope to have a role in the longer term and systemic changes needed in the areas of health care, workforce and economic development, education and housing."

One by one, thousands were served:

Highlights of how Catholic Charities reduces poverty and improves lives, one program, one project... one person at a time.

From the Catholic Charities of Baltimore annual report "The Power of One"

By the numbers for the programs of Catholic Charities of Baltimore (FY 2014):

Meals served: 522,126

Transitional and permanent housing placements: 1,328

Employment placements: 577

Assisted with emergency, intake, and case management services: 11,948

Volunteers: 22,796

Project SERVE hours: 8,848

Total hours served: 176,006

Read more personal stories about the services and those who were served last year here in the annual report.

“...part of the work of the Church in the Baltimore community”