

Mission:

To provide a nutritious daily meal to the hungry of the area, as well as to provide a safe and sheltered place for social gathering.



The Benton Harbor
Soup Kitchen

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A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION • 269-925-8204 • Summer 2021 EDITION



Are We There Yet?

That familiar refrain from summer vacation car trips comes to mind whenever I hear the all-too-familiar question, "When will you open the dining room?"

We are still serving sack lunches. We decided that we would rather be over-cautious than take chances with anyone's health. The Soup Kitchen has never, in 41½ years, been the place that made people sick.

While most of our volunteers are vaccinated, most of our guests are not. We held two vaccination clinics at The Soup Kitchen and vaccinated 29 people. Our average daily lunch attendance has been 120 through the summer. About a dozen Soup Kitchen guests were vaccinated before we hosted our clinics. That is a vaccination level of 33%, meaning we are in the Danger Zone."

On the morning of our second clinic one of our older guests, an affable fellow who went by the name Obama, passed away from Covid-10. He had been in the hospital ICU for over a month.

The experts predicted that the Delta variant of the virus would become the dominant strain in the United States. "It's actually quite dramatic how the growth rate will change," said Dr. Wilson of the Yale College of Medicine. "Delta is spreading 50% faster than Alpha, which was 50%

more contagious than the original strain of SARS-CoV-2, he said. "In a completely unmitigated environment—where no one is vaccinated or wearing masks—it's estimated that the average person infected with the original corona virus strain will infect 2.5 other people," Dr. Wilson says. "In the same environment, Delta would spread from one person to maybe 3.5 or 4 other people."

As of this writing, Berrien County is seeing little growth in cases and hospitalizations. Therefore we are still planning to open the dining room for regular service in September. The final decision will depend on the Covid-19 levels at that time.

So no, were not there yet. But we are hopeful.



JUST VACCINATED!



The Bistro on the Boulevard Benefit Dinner

Kudos to the Bistro team for overcoming the challenges of Covid-19 and the state's restrictions to present The Soup Kitchen with a resounding success on Sunday, April 25, 2021 at our annual Benefit Dinner fundraiser. Once again, all proceeds came to The Soup Kitchen.

We thank the Bistro on the Boulevard's president, Mark Whitwam, general manager Rita Downey, chef Cheryl Bernacchi, and dining room manager Robert Ross.

Continued next column

Food is Everybody

Thanks to our many loyal volunteers and donors, we served more than 43,000 meals last year. This event inspired many wonderful compliments. Among them:

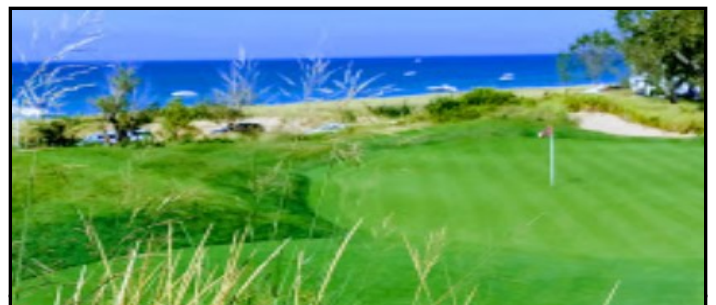
- ".....server, food, and ambiance were great"
- ".....definitely will do it again"
- ".....service was wonderful"
- ".....I always like Bistro food" ".....The curbside meal was excellent, the service prompt"
- ".....the curbside option was a neat idea"
- ".....advised to eat healthy, and, although I'm not much for Salmon, but I ordered it. It was so delicious—I will order it again"
- ".....A very good cause and a very good meal"

Despite safe –distancing and table size limits, the diners were very pleased with the promptness and quality of the service, and the typical excellence of the meals.

For those of you who plan ahead, next year's Benefit Dinner will be Sunday, April 24, 2022 at the Bistro.



Lowell Benson enjoying al fresco dining at The Soup Kitchen.



THANK YOU HARBOR SHORES AND GOLFERS

Our June 2021 Soup Kitchen golf scramble at Harbor Shores was again a great success and our thanks to all involved. The weather looked "iffy" at the onset, but turned out very well; scores were low. Great prizes were offered by Harbor Shores, as usual. Our Thanks go out to LECO Corporation, the Marzke Foundation, Kruggel Lawton CPAs, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Anne & Andy Takacs, and Juli & KC Gast for sponsoring the 2021 outing. We are tentatively scheduled to repeat on June 20, 2022. Hope to see you there!



Row Of Lunch Bags

People ask me why The Soup Kitchen is so important. It's simple. Giving a person decent nutrition is the first step on the ladder of making better choices, improving one's health, finding employment, and regaining independence.

I Feel Like God's Given Me a Second Chance



I met Tim for the second time last June. I couldn't place him, but was sure that I had met him before. There was no time to talk then, and Tim, who is naturally reticent, said thank-you for the lunch and moved along.

A few weeks later, Tim knocked on the back door of The Soup Kitchen. He offered his services and those of some other Men's Shelter residents to free a van that was stuck in the sand that has been passing for Michigan Street most of this summer. The van landed there earlier that morning when one of our regular donors decided to ignore the "Road Closed" signs and tried to drive through it.

After the guys successfully dug the van out, Tim and I started catching up. He reminded me that he had been in the shelter about three years ago. That was what I remembered – his speech. It is steeped in the words and attitude and of a 12-step program.

Tim's first trip to the shelter started about a year and a half prior. Tim had a drinking and drug evening that put him in a coma for three months. That night he had been unbelievably drunk, and followed that by accepting a friend's invitation to snort a line. What Tim thought was cocaine was actually heroin.

The next thing Tim remembers is a Doctor trying to revive him. This happened after he had 54 minutes of CPR. Tim had heard his family discussing his funeral plans while he was struggling to regain consciousness.

That near-fatal drug and alcohol combination caused a traumatic brain injury. Tim's limbs were so bruised (from 36 IV lines) that the doctors wanted to amputate them.

Tim refused, and luckily the bruises healed. It took 2 ½ weeks before Tim could eat solid food or sit up, and then it took two more months of physical therapy before he could leave the hospital.

Like most addicts with near death misses, Tim went straight into a rehab for a few months and then stayed sober for a year and a half. A year and a half is quite a good stretch of recovery ... but then he started drinking again.

That was enough for his girlfriend. She left and Tim became homeless. That was what led him to his first three-week stay in the Men's Shelter. Losing a girlfriend and a home was enough to make Tim remember that he was really afraid of the drugs and alcohol, so he returned to sobriety.

Tim started working construction with the goal of saving enough money to rent a house. While working full-time, he obtained a Med Tech license and began working in a nursing home. Tim enjoyed being a Med Tech and really liked the work. Tim met his new girlfriend at the nursing home. With both of them working, they could afford a house payment so Tim, his girlfriend, and her three children moved in together.

By August the pandemic had cost Tim his job. Financial stresses started to build because Tim was responsible for supporting her kids and staying current with his own child support payments. Tim's girlfriend left with her kids, and that left Tim unable to pay the mortgage. A few months later the house was gone. Tim was again homeless, and this time he was on child support probation because of the money he owed. (He had been in arrears because of illness.) The delinquent child support lead to an arrest in February, and that arrest was considered a felony because of the amount of money owed. This was Tim's second arrest; his first was at age 17 for minor in possession of alcohol.

Still working as much as possible, Tim remained homeless for eight months because the shelter did not accept new residents during the pandemic. He was admitted to the shelter March 2021. Staying in the shelter was much more than just a place to sleep. It helped Tim fulfill the court's requirement that a probationer must have a permanent residence.

Tim showed me the used car he recently purchased, and told me that he has some job interviews scheduled. Tim is starting again, eager to find full-time work and looking forward to getting his own place again.

I teased Tim and asked if he was trying to break out of his "shy-guy" persona by digging out the van and giving rides to shelter residents. He said, "I feel like God's given me a second chance, and I ought to do some good with it."

SOUP KITCHEN DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

The Soup Kitchen is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to feed a nutritious meal to the hungry. **Donations to The Soup Kitchen are deductible to the full extent of the federal law.** Please consult your tax advisor for further information on the tax benefits of your generous donation.

GIFTS of STOCK SHARES :

The Soup Kitchen can accept direct donation of stock shares. Please email m@soupk.org for more information.

THE THRIVENT CHOICE® PROGRAM

Eligible members invited to direct Choice Dollars can recommend where Thrivent should distribute some of its charitable funds among thousands of enrolled 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, including The Soup Kitchen Inc.

Visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice or ask your representative for more information.

The Soup Kitchen
has attained
Guidestar's Platinum
Seal
of Transparency, the
highest level ranking.



Many thanks to Falak Farms for their generous donations. Asparagus is a very popular vegetable at The Soup Kitchen.



Chocolate milk always draws a crowd.

Food is a language, a way of communicating love and honoring tradition. It is something to be enjoyed and savored—and shared.

SOUP KITCHEN PRESENTATIONS

We would be honored to present The Soup Kitchen story to your organization.
Please call 925-8204 or email m@soupk.org to schedule.