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10 volunteer and donation opportunities to aid Philly's hungry this holiday season



By Peak Johnson / CONTRIBUTOR

BROKE IN PHILLY

*Generocity is one of 21 news organizations producing **Broke in Philly**, a collaborative reporting project on solutions to poverty and the city's push toward economic justice.*

Full disclosure: The author of this story is an administrative assistant at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs, one of Project HOME's sites. That association is unrelated to the nonprofit's inclusion in this list.

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In Philadelphia, there's no shortage of need to help people facing economic hardships. See: the stagnant poverty rate, increasing hunger, a difficult-to-navigate affordable housing crisis.

Thankfully, there are also a wealth of nonprofits and other social service organizations eager to step in year-round — and especially on holidays associated with meals, comfort and community.

But it takes a heck of a lot of time and planning to make such events run smoothly.

In preparation for each year's Thanksgiving service, **Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission (SBRM)**, for instance, begins its outreach to local business, churches, schools and community partners in late July to begin coordinating sites for its food drive to stock the Thanksgiving pantry.

"Each year, we refine the plan made the year before, so this year we have 140 years of planning invested into our food drive and Thanksgiving meal," said Elizabeth Hefner, SBRM's director of advancement. (The nonprofit was founded in 1878.) "In early September, we share our shopping list and all of our food drive partners begin collecting items. This is also when we share our food drive needs on social media, in emails, and with all of our supporter to really get the word out."

The food drive brings in nearly a million pound of food, Hefner said. In 2017, SBRN was able to serve more than 300 people, and expects to serve even more this year — and the meal is open to anyone and everyone. Volunteers and staff will spend more than 20 hours planning and cooking the Thanksgiving meal.

Julio Arroyo, SBRM's director of food services, has served more than one million meals at the rescue mission, Hefner said. Arroyo begins planning the Thanksgiving meal menu in early October and begins cooking two days before Thanksgiving in addition to serving SBRM's normal three meals each day.

FROM OUR PARTNERS

SBRM also hosts 30 to 40 volunteers each year to help prepare, decorate their dining room and serve the Thanksgiving meal. While the org does have all of its volunteer opportunities filled for the upcoming holiday, it needs volunteers every other day of the year, too.

"We rely on volunteers to sustain our work every day of the year, as they make up 70 percent of our workforce," Hefner said. "We cannot do this work without volunteers."

People who would like to volunteer with SBRM should email volunteer@sundaybreakfast.org or call 215-922-6400 x 1007 for more information.

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If you're the type who enjoys helping others during this time of year, there are other opportunities to volunteer throughout the holiday season:

Rock Ministries

Each year, the religious and boxing org holds a community Thanksgiving meal for those residing in the Kensington area. The day is filled with fellowship, good food, music and much more. This will be Rock's 10th year hosting the meal at its ministry and is always seeking donations and volunteers.

If you're interested in helping out, know that space is filling up quickly. Throughout the day, Rock has between 200 to 300 volunteers assisting. You can register here or reach out to Rock's Thanksgiving coordinator, **Paul Hurlock**, at phurlock23@gmail.com or 215-913-9035.

WMGK's John DeBella Turkey Drop 2018

Presented by ACME Markets and Parx Casino, the annual John DeBella Turkey Drop calls itself "the largest one day food gathering event in Philadelphia." Donations are collected to benefit **Cityteam Philadelphia**, an organization that provides holiday meals to families in the region.

Turkey and monetary donations will be collected on Tuesday, Nov. 20 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Collection locations will be at ACMEs around the tri-state area, as well as the **Kimmel Center**. You can also donate online.

Wells Fargo Mobile Food Bank

Wells Fargo and **Philabundance** are working together this holiday season to collect nonperishable food items for those in need. Through Dec. 31, Philadelphians will be able to donate items at different Wells Fargo branches around the city.

There will also be a mobile, pop-up food bank visiting locations such as the **Wells Fargo Center**, **Dilworth Park** and **Headhouse Square** where contributions to the food bank can be made. Last year, more than 5,295 pounds of non-perishable food items were delivered to local food banks and pantries, providing almost 4,413 meals.

ACHIEVEability

The West Philadelphia nonprofit is looking for donors to provide 20 additional Thanksgiving meals. If interested, there are a few different ways that a person can help those who are less fortunate this holiday season:

You can donate a full Thanksgiving meal basket. In addition to turkey, you can include items such as stuffing, mac and cheese, cornbread, canned vegetables, sweet potatoes and the like.

You can also make a monetary donation through Nov. 19. A full Thanksgiving meal can be funded with \$40. You can also mail in a donation to 35 N. 60th Street.

MANNA

The hunger alleviation nonprofit held its annual **Pie in The Sky** fundraiser to not only invite volunteers to help in preparing and delivering meals to people with life-threatening illnesses, but also to benefit its Thanksgiving meal program. (Read about this author's recent visit to a pie-baking day here.)

You can find more information on MANNA volunteer opportunities here or by calling 215-496-2662.

Coalition Against Hunger

The nonprofit published a list of locations where you can donate your meal-serving time (<http://www.hungercoalition.org/node/1111>) this holiday season, including on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Global Citizen

At the end of the Thanksgiving Day parade, the civic engagement nonprofit will be collecting items for people experiencing homelessness at **Thomas Paine Plaza**. Items needed include socks, underwear and snacks. Since the drive is starting directly after the parade, keep in mind that you might want to give yourself some extra time to make it to the plaza because of traffic.

Project HOME

The homelessness nonprofit is hosting its annual Thanksgiving Day service at its 1515 Fairmount Ave. location at 10 a.m. The nonprofit still needs people to help with music and readings, but it's a good idea to call ahead. You can reach out to **Will O' Brien** at 215-232-7272, ext. 3047 or willobrien@projecthome.org.

St. Francis Inn soup kitchen

The soup kitchen's volunteer roster is full for the Thanksgiving holiday, but they have some spots open around Christmastime and will be serving on Dec. 25 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 pm and from 4 to 6:30 pm on Dec. 26, 27 and 28. Those interested in helping out on those days can reach out to St. Francis' volunteer coordinator, **Sister Leslie** — leslieosf@aol.com.

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