

About Stone Soup Dinner Sponsorship

What is Stone Soup?

Stone Soup is a made-in-Mission initiative aimed at reducing and eliminating homelessness in our community. It is founded in the principle that all of us have something to contribute neighbor to neighbor. Stone Soup works with community groups of every size and description to muster resources that will help people in need to find secure housing and the means to remain successfully in their home.

What's the purpose of a Stone Soup dinner?

At first glance, it might appear that the purpose of a Stone Soup dinner is a free meal for people in need, but this is not the case. In reality, Stone Soup dinners are a community-bridging exercise. They use the power of constructive mutual activity to:

- Reduce stigma about homelessness and its contributing factors;
- Build neighbor-to-neighbor relationships that can help;
- Inspire members of the community to think about how they can contribute to reduce homelessness;
- Build understanding about homelessness and its causes;
- Help people to understand the variety of resources available in our community;
- And create a stronger sense of community through celebration, gratitude and altruism.

What are the ingredients of a Stone Soup dinner?

At approximately 3 PM, each dinner begins with community members gathering to prepare the meal and the eating space. Everyone is welcome and we usually have plenty of volunteers. Everybody gets to work, working in the kitchen, setting at the dining room, arranging the takeaway area (see below), receiving donations, greeting people and doing whatever else is necessary.

The activities before and after dinner are just as important as the meal itself. Typically, preparation and set up are handled quickly, so it will be important for the sponsor to work with the Stone Soup team in planning a social activity to fill the space while supper cooks. This time can be used for meaningful planning, discussion, audiovisual presentations, or meaningful socialization. Something as simple as planning to play card games is a good addition to the dinner. Each group can decide for itself what they would like to do with this time.

Generally, after dinner has been served (usually at about 5 pm) and eaten, the host group gives a brief presentation. The group might choose to orient the community to their mission, services and philosophy. They might generate a conversation or engage in a planning session. They might ask



people to share their personal stories. They might ask other community partners to present as well. Any or all of these are acceptable.



The actual meal at a Stone Soup dinner is constructed in a “community potluck” style, just as in the original Stone Soup story. Most commonly, we serve one or two different types of soup, with one usually being a vegetarian choice. However, we are not bound to soup as a meal choice, and many groups have chosen to make other “large pot” items, including chili, spaghetti, salads, Indian tacos, pancakes and barbecues. When it comes to relying on community food donations, soup is generally a safe choice. But

if the sponsor is willing to provide anything that may not be provided by the community (meat, for example) just about any food can be prepared. As a general rule, it’s a good idea to provide food where there will be considerable leftovers and which guests can takeaway in plastic containers for consumption at other times. Any leftovers or unused ingredients are donated to local programs that serve people in poverty or homelessness. If the sponsor can use these resources, we are happy to leave them behind.

As part of each dinner, takeaway tables are set up. These tables are used for toiletries, feminine hygiene products, clothing, food and other items as specified by the sponsor. In order to maintain the dignity of people in need, the tables are usually set off in a private area and people are encouraged to take what they need, using grocery bags we provide. Volunteers are asked to supervise the area, largely so that they can encourage people to take what is needed. We know that many of our guests know others who are in need as well, so we encourage them to take things for other people.

What’s involved in being a Stone Soup dinner sponsor?

Stone Soup sponsors are asked to provide, at a minimum:

- An accessible venue capable of supporting 60 to 80 guests, and with some method for safely preparing a meal and coffee. If the host does not have access to a venue of their own, we can assist by using a space such as All Saints Church on Second Avenue. There is a nominal fee for the church and venue insurance that would need to be covered by the sponsor.
- A core of volunteers to help in the kitchen with set up and cleaning. (Typically five people is a good start because the community will generate the rest of the volunteers needed.)
- A host speaker for the evening and, if desired, someone to greet or give a blessing.
- Pre-and post-dinner activities. We are happy to help plan these.

- Sharing of the invitation to the dinner to their members, and to the larger community. We will provide a poster template that can be distributed electronically as well as posted around town. We will also assist in publicizing the dinner.
- If necessary, a donation of some food for the meal.

Who can sponsor a dinner?

Any community group, whether formally organized or not, can host a dinner. Additionally, we welcome the idea of groups working together in partnership. Past sponsors have included the fire department, local churches, community foundations, social service providers, schools and other neighborhood groups. We welcome any group that wants to work with us.

Why should your group sponsor a dinner?



It's a great way to let the community know you care to share your group's vision and mission with them. It is, of course, a great way to help build the community of Mission, and a step toward ending homelessness in our city. Your sponsorship helps to end the damaging stigma of homelessness and build a sense of belonging and neighborliness within our city.

Sponsoring a dinner can be a profound and moving experience. It is common for people to remark that they leave feeling much more confident in their community and human nature. Stone Soup dinners have the power to inspire our community to act. We invite you to help us take action too.

Sensitivities/Ethical Considerations

Participants are welcome to engage with the event in whatever way they are comfortable. This may look like passive engagement, seeing withdrawn and keeping to oneself or it may look like someone coming in and out of the room multiple times. We meet people where they are at and offer an open mind over judgement and friendship over shaming. We encourage you to sit with dinner guests and get to know the diversity of faces in community.

Similarly, we don't place restrictions on people at the takeaway table or with food leftovers. In our experience, people are deserving of our trust in their use of these things. Quite often, people gather more than they need for themselves because they intend to share it with others who did not attend the dinners. This is very in keeping with the values of Stone Soup. We often have volunteers supervised these tables, but the reason they are there is to encourage people to collect things they may need and to do so with a sense of dignity.

Needed Items:

These items may be provided by the venue. Check to be sure in advance.



- Hand soap
- Dish washing soap
- Disposable kitchen gloves
- Coffee maker and cups
- Cleaning cloths and paper towel
- Garbage bags
- Serving utensils
- A first aid kit on hand in case of minor accidents
- Art supplies for tables (if an art activity is planned)
- Sharps boxes for bathrooms (Kirsten will supply these)

Common Volunteer Assignments:

There are a variety of things where volunteers can be allocated:

- Kitchen crew and supervisor
- Coffee crew
- Clean up crew and supervisor
- Dining room set up and supervisor
- Takeaway table set up and hosting
- Greeters and pre-dinner blessing, If desired
- Presenters and facilitators of those pre-and post-dinner activities or discussion
- Children's activity supervisor (commonly a table is set up for kids to partake in craft or other activities)
- Decorating and activity set up, if desired



Check in with your venue about the following points:



Will you be required to replenish the toilet paper used?
Will you be required to demonstrate insurance to use the space?
Will you be required to pay any kind of damage deposit or cleaning fee?
Some guests may smoke, so where is a suitable place and could cigarette butts be collected outside in coffee cans?