

FINAL SUMMARY

Part A:

What was the mission of Our Daily Bread? How do they address food insecurity? Did COVID impact that work? How is their work supported (partnerships, financially etc)?

Our Daily Bread is a non-profit organization in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio. Since its opening in 1985 Our Daily Bread has become more than just a soup kitchen, it has become a community hub and cornerstone in the efforts to improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity in the downtown Cincinnati area. Since its beginning 36 years ago Our Daily Bread has become an integral part of the Over the Rhine community, cultivating trust in the community by encouraging anyone and everyone to visit their facilities daily. Guests not only receive food, but are encouraged to stay, relax, play games, and socialize with each other in a safe environment, fostering connections and improving well-being. The emphasis that Our Daily Bread places on creating a fun and social environment where individuals experiencing homelessness can enjoy themselves while coming into contact with helpful resources provides a unique opportunity for other organizations to advertise their resources and for groups to learn from and identify the needs of this population.

Our Daily Bread is the largest soup kitchen in the area, handing out over 400 meals per day and offering social services to its patrons. Based on previous surveys, 53.2% of respondents visit Our Daily Bread every day, making it an excellent resource to obtain more information about the needs of individuals experiencing food insecurity. This demonstrates the crucial role that Our Daily Bread has in ensuring Cincinnati locals are able to find food. According to the Annual 2021 “By the Numbers” report, they served 160,076 meals last year.¹ This impact is comprised of 91,202 on-site meals, 49,192 snack bags, and 19,682 meals provided to other shelters and soup kitchens in the area. Of the patrons surveyed for the Annual report, 27.3% frequented Our Daily Bread two to four times a week, 53.2% frequented Our Daily Bread every day, 9.1% frequented Our Daily Bread once a week, and the remaining 10.4% visited less frequently. Of the patrons surveyed for the Annual Report, 16.4% found that the pandemic made it easier for them to access food, 45.4% found no change in their access to food due to the pandemic, and 41.1% of patrons found it harder to access food after the pandemic.

Part B:

How does food insecurity/homelessness impact the Cincinnati community in general and their clients specifically? How does Our Daily Bread make Cincinnati better? Are there any new or increased needs as a result of COVID or current socioeconomic pressures?

Food insecurity affects more than 270,000 households in the Cincinnati area and its prevalence has increased, not just in Cincinnati, but globally, since the COVID-19 pandemic forced many soup kitchens to close their doors or limit their services.² This decrease in the availability of resources has disproportionately impacted individuals being displaced or experiencing homelessness. According to 2021 Ohio county data, 17% of Hamilton County, Ohio suffer from

severe housing problems, defined as overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities.³ Based on a 2023 survey of the guests of Our Daily Bread about 70% of the population feels that they have enough food options with about 26% answering that they do not. While Our Daily Bread has clearly done an excellent job of meeting the needs of the majority of the community there are still barriers to overcome. The same survey also asked about living conditions and resources needed by the community. Only 24% of patrons reported living in stable housing while 48% reported living either in a homeless shelter or unsheltered. When asked about what they and their community needed most, the most common responses were stable jobs and housing. This progress speaks volumes to the work done by Our Daily Bread. Most patrons have stable food and are able to fill their day-to-day needs, so many are looking for more permanent solutions to their situations.

While the staff at Our Daily Bread continues to work to make sure that all patrons have equal access to food, they are also looking to provide people experiencing homelessness with opportunities for jobs and stable housing. In response to the findings of their 2023 survey they have ventured into a new partnership with Ohio Means Jobs. Ohio Means Jobs is a statewide organization dedicated to connecting people to stable career and education opportunities, providing resources like resume building, career counseling, funding for training, and connecting people to a college education. They provide resources for individuals with a criminal history, mental illness, history of drug abuse and disabilities which describe a large portion of individuals experiencing homelessness. This partnership exemplifies the forward-thinking approach of the staff at Our Daily Bread and their commitment to tangible improvements in the lives of their guests.

Part C:

How might students and physicians advocate to Cincinnati city government on behalf of the needs of Our Daily Bread and the homeless community? How can the work of Our Daily Bread be better supported and expanded? (educating city officials on the need and the value is part of advocacy) What needs particularly require support at this time?

For years Our Daily Bread has provided essential resources to the homeless population and those grappling with food insecurity in the Over the Rhine area. The primary focus has been food but the contributions of the staff extend far beyond providing consistent meals. The space created inside the facility has fostered community and created a platform for other resources, like Ohio Means Jobs and longer term housing opportunities to reach people experiencing homelessness. Despite the incredible self-sufficiency and progressive mindset of Our Daily Bread, recent changes in the Over the Rhine neighborhood have led to pressure on the staff to move locations to make space for the restaurants and coffee shops filling the area. Because of high-profile businesses nearby, Our Daily Bread has had to limit their hours to Monday-Friday from 8 am to 12 pm. To combat this limitation they provide to-go meals to give patrons food during the times they are closed but this limits the population that they are able to serve.

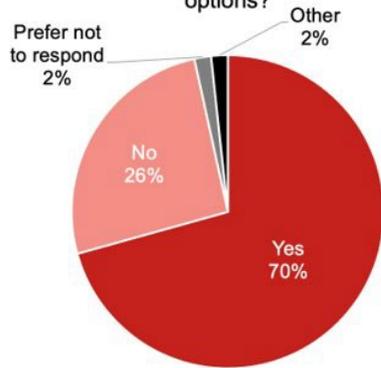
As advocates for Our Daily Bread and the populations they serve, we can support the preservation of the facility against the encroachment of local businesses. Relocating would not just be a logistical nightmare - it will disrupt a key cornerstone in the network of resources for people experiencing homelessness and food insecurity in the Over the Rhine area. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the gentrification of the area, people are already experiencing considerable challenges. This issue poses a threat, not just to the continuity of Our Daily Bread, but to the welfare of the entire community it serves. As advocates we could take on the role of educators to the larger Cincinnati community. Helping the people of Cincinnati understand the effects of gentrification and how they hurt the city as a whole may generate public awareness and support. As physicians, educating the community on the health risks posed for a person experiencing homelessness will help others understand the need for community resources and the current circumstances that Our Daily Bread patrons endure. Sharing these views would humanize the lived experience of homelessness while highlighting the importance of Our Daily Bread in the Over the Rhine community.

The problem faced by Our Daily Bread symbolizes a larger issue at hand – the struggle to create support for non-profit resources in the face of commercial interests. Advocacy from students and physicians can serve as a pivotal force to maintain the organization's current location and prevent local businesses from overtaking necessary local resources. The incredible impact of Our Daily Bread on the OTR community, coupled with its expansion into career support and beyond, underscores its essential role and the urgency of maintaining its foothold. In a world where tangible assistance is needed more than ever, the collective effort to uphold such institutions becomes of utmost importance.

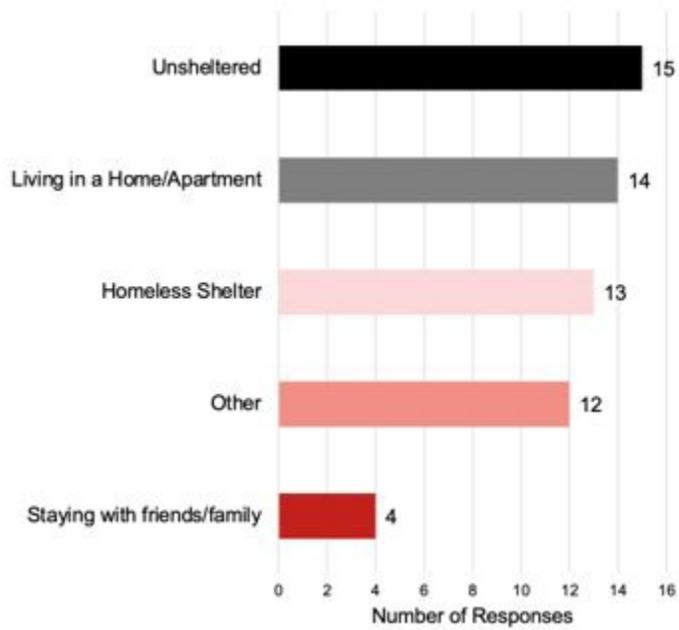
Citations

1. By The Numbers. Our Daily Bread Soup Kitchen and Social Center. 2021. <https://www.ourdailybread.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/By-the-Numbers-2021.pdf>
2. Food insecurity and its potential consequences. Public Health Nutrition. 2020;23(4):577-578. doi:10.1017/S1368980020000269
3. 2021 Cincinnati Homelessness Data. Strategies to End Homelessness. 2022. Web. Accessed on 4/4/2023 from <https://www.strategiestoendhomelessness.org/2021-cincinnati-homelessness-data/#:~:text=2021%20Cincinnati%20Homelessness%20Data%3A%20People,Shelter%20%26%20on%20the%20Streets%E2%80%8B&text=917%20unsheltered%20on%20the%20streets,unsheltered%20homelessness%20is%2035%25%20vs.>

Do you feel like you have enough food options?



Current Housing Status



Desired Resources

