

SMACK DAB TURNS SUCCESSFUL DAY OF SERVICE INTO MONTHLY COMMUNITY TRADITION

ROGERS PARK BRUNCH SPOT PAUSES LONG-RUNNING COMMUNITY MEAL WHILE EXPANDING A NEW HANDS-ON APPROACH TO ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY



smack dab chicago logo

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, August 26, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After

years of serving thousands of Community Meals to neighbors in Rogers Park and beyond, Smack Dab is temporarily pausing its monthly Community Meal program while turning another recent act of community care into a new monthly tradition.

“

Sometimes the most useful thing we can do is help make sure there is actually food in the kitchen when somebody opens the cabinet or the refrigerator.”

Teeny - Owner

Beginning this fall, Smack Dab will host a Day of Service on the second Wednesday of every month, bringing together team members, volunteers, and neighbors to prepare food and supplies for local mutual aid efforts.

The decision follows the success of Smack Dab's first Day of Service earlier this month. In just one afternoon, Smack Dab team members and volunteers packed 350 pounds of rice, beans, and lentils, 80 pounds of fresh chicken, and 60

pounds of frozen vegetables before loading everything into the nearby Love Fridge. The food, packaging, and labor for the project totaled approximately \$550, funded in part through Smack Dab's ongoing Mutual Aid Fund and donations from customers.

A DIFFERENT WAY TO SHOW UP FOR FOOD INSECURITY

For Smack Dab, the Day of Service also created an opportunity to think more expansively about what food access can look like.

Food insecurity does not always mean someone lacks a kitchen or the ability to prepare a meal. Often, people know how to cook, have kitchens, and are already preparing food for themselves

and their families. What they are missing are enough ingredients to keep those kitchens stocked.

“There are a lot of people using the Love Fridge who absolutely have kitchens. They cook. They know how to feed themselves and their families. They just don’t always have enough food in those kitchens,” said Smack Dab owner Teeny. “There is something really powerful about giving somebody rice, beans, vegetables, chicken, and other staples and knowing those ingredients might become several meals instead of just one.”

That realization helped shape Smack Dab’s decision to continue the Day of Service as a monthly event.

Rather than focusing exclusively on prepared meals, the service days allow volunteers to help provide staple ingredients that neighbors can take home, combine with what they already have, and use in whatever way makes the most sense for their household.

“We have always believed that feeding people is about more than handing someone a plate,” Teeny said. “Sometimes the most useful thing we can do is help make sure there is actually food in the kitchen when somebody opens the cabinet or the refrigerator.”

COMMUNITY MEAL IS PAUSED, NOT FORGOTTEN

Smack Dab’s Community Meal has been part of the restaurant’s community work for years, providing thousands of meals on a pay-what-you-can basis.

But producing the meal requires significant coordination, preparation, labor, and care.

FREE BEVS + PASTRIES FOR OUR STREET PATROLLERS

****COME GET A FREE COFFEE/COLDBREW & A DONUT ON US ANYTIME YOU ARE DEFENDING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AGAINST ICE.****

You— yes you, doing the Lord’s work out there—on neighborhood watch, defending the street, walking kids to and from school, learning community care and self defense, giving pro-bono advice and support—anytime you want to stop by, get free coffee/coldbrew/tea on us, along with a donut or a muffin.

FREE WHISTLES ARE BACK!! We just got 300 more whistles. Snag up to 3 at a time.

PS: are you an neighborhood organization that needs a secure, ADA accessible space to meet/organize? We even have a parking lot! [Reach out!](#)

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WHISTLES + CARDS

Smack Dab Community Care



Community Dinner - Always Vegan

Right now, Smack Dab is intentionally making room for team members who need additional time and support. Rather than continuing Community Meal without the capacity to deliver it in the way the team believes it deserves, Smack Dab has chosen to pause the program.

"We love Community Meal. We have fed thousands of people through it, and it means so much to us," Teeny said. "But taking care of community also has to include taking care of the people doing the work. Right now our team needs a little more room to breathe, and I would rather pause Community Meal than ask people to stretch themselves past what is sustainable."

The hope is that Community Meal will return when the restaurant once again has the capacity to execute it with the same care that has defined the program.

In the meantime, the work continues.

SERVICE BECOMES A MONTHLY RITUAL

Smack Dab's new Day of Service will take place on the second Wednesday of each month.

Projects may change depending on what the community needs, but future service days may include packing dry goods and fresh food, stocking the Love Fridge, cleaning and caring for the surrounding area, and supporting other neighborhood mutual aid efforts.

Volunteers will be invited to participate, with opportunities designed to make service accessible to community members of different ages and abilities. Smack Dab's first service day included container-filling work that was especially approachable for families and children.

"There was something really beautiful about everybody working together," Teeny said. "You look around and suddenly hundreds of pounds of food are packed and ready for people to take home. It felt useful. It felt joyful. It felt like community. We finished the first one and immediately thought, 'Okay, we need to do this again.'"

A volunteer registration form will be available for community members interested in participating in upcoming service days.

MUTUAL AID AT SMACK DAB CONTINUES EVERY DAY

The pause in Community Meal does not mean the end of Smack Dab's broader mutual aid work.

Neighbors experiencing food insecurity can still access Smack Dab's ongoing mutual aid meal during regular business hours, no questions asked. Customers can also contribute directly to the restaurant's Mutual Aid Fund or add a donation when placing an order, helping fund food,

packaging, and labor for future service projects.

The restaurant has long viewed mutual aid as part of its role as an independent neighborhood business rather than a separate initiative that only happens when circumstances are convenient.

The monthly Day of Service is the latest evolution of that commitment.

“Community care can change shape,” Teeny said. “Sometimes it looks like serving a hot meal. Sometimes it looks like filling hundreds of containers with rice and beans. Sometimes it looks like giving your staff the time they need so they can keep doing this work without burning out. All of those things matter.”

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Smack Dab’s Day of Service will take place on the second Wednesday of every month in Rogers Park.

Community members interested in volunteering will be able to register through [Smack Dab’s volunteer form](#). Those who cannot volunteer but still want to support the work can donate to the Smack Dab Mutual Aid Fund, which helps cover the food, supplies, packaging, and labor associated with community food programs.

More information about upcoming service opportunities will be shared through Smack Dab’s website, email list, and social media channels.

ABOUT SMACK DAB

Smack Dab is an independent, queer woman-owned [brunch](#) restaurant in Rogers Park, Chicago, known for scratch-made breakfast and brunch, inclusive vegan and gluten-free options, Chicago catering, [private events](#), and a longstanding commitment to community care. Through mutual aid meals, food access initiatives, neighborhood partnerships, and volunteer service, Smack Dab works to build a restaurant where feeding people means more than what happens across the counter.

Teeny Forrester
Smack Dab Chicago
+1 (872) 241-9111
[email us here](#)

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