



Hands tell the story of helping and receiving at soup kitchen.
(Staff Photo by Michael F. O'Brien)

They Dine On Soup, Chitchat

By JANET KOCH
Staff Reporter

The soup they serve at 679 Chapel St. is rich, delicious and nourishing because so many different things go into it. The lunchable conversation is exactly the same way.

Since November downtown residents who have fallen on adversity have been able to get at least two good hot meals a week and some hearty companionship at the Community Soup Kitchen.



The
Morning
Line

From a table of four the first day, business has increased to 30 people and more — particularly toward the end of the month when pensioners and others "squeaking by" find their first-of-the-month checks running out.

"When we first opened we thought food would be the most important thing.

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But being able to talk to others in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere is just as much a draw," said Diane Welborn, a VISTA volunteer managing the kitchen this year.

On any Tuesday or Saturday the typical conversation may cover the relative womanly merits of Wonder Woman and Emma Peel, the suffering of Napoleon's army in the Russian winter, religious philosophy, and the difficulties of "drying out" after a binge.

The table is set with linen, fresh mock orange blossoms from Diane's garden, and the Salvation Army kitchen's grand total of 15 bowls. The volunteer dishwashers do double duty.

If you ask the volunteer cook of the day for the recipe, she'll laugh at you. Each batch has its "foundation" laid days before, and whatever is available finds its way into the pot.

The resulting brew of rice, barley, chicken stock, new potatoes, corn, onions, peas, and numerous other healthy ingredients is supplemented by bread, peanut butter, tea and coffee and an occasional dessert.

Diane wangles 20 loaves of bread for \$2 from a local bakery. Other economies and instances of generosity hold the cost of each "sitting" to a maximum of \$15.

This summer a special plot in Dixwell Q House's community garden at Ashmun and Bristol streets will supplement the larder even further.

"Lots of people who come have no cooking facilities where they live, either at the YMCA, rooming houses, or out in the open air. We get some traveling teenagers, and families on Saturdays. Often

when I'm downtown during the week and I see someone they'll say to me 'I wish the soup kitchen were open today!'" Diane said.

Plans to serve daily are in the offing, but first the soup kitchen must find new — and preferably permanent — quarters by next month. After that donations of money, food, and volunteer time will have to increase.

Right now the Downtown Cooperative Ministry, the Episcopal Deanery, Yale's Dwight Hall, the distribution committee of the April Walk Against Hunger proceeds and area churches are the soup kitchen's angels.

Interested angels can call Dwight Hall at 67 High St.