

I enjoy going to the Bayanihan Centre; there, I eat and socialize (aren't those words synonyms?) Over the years, a few times, I volunteered to serve soup and wash dishes on a Sunday. This allowed me to connect with the well-off, so to speak.

Having heard of the Feed the Needy program, I offered Norma Duy and her team of volunteers; some faces were familiar but I also met members of the Filipino community that I didn't know; it was fun to prepare food and chat with everyone. I had a great time but what will stay with me is what I saw the moment the doors of the Centre were opened for the so-called *needy*. There were men and women, old and young, some in dirty clothes, others properly dressed; I could have seen one of them at Serious Coffee reading the *Globe and Mail*. Once their plate was filled, they got a cup or a glass of something (coffee, tea or fruit juice) and went to sit at a table. They seemed to know each other but the atmosphere was subdued. They ate; some would come for a second helping, others asked for a container to take home. What's home for them? They are homeless. It was warm in the Centre and so was the food that they were eating; outside, it was dark and windy. One had a book of English poetry, a woman, with one eye covered with a dressing pad came in a wheel chair. Someone I have known for years showed up; I sat with him, we exchanged a few words in French. Suddenly, I saw myself in him; and in the other needy who were eating, several as old as me. That day, with my hands in plastic gloves, I tried to be the best waiter that I could

When I ask myself: Who are they? Why are they where they now are? I have no answer except this: I could be one of them (carrying my personal history in a garbage bag), and anonymous under several layers of clothes. I will never forget that experience. Thanks, Norma and others for accepting me as part of the team; my apologies for not saying it in Tagalog!

Here are some stats,

February 20, 2016 (78 guests)

Menu: Pansit, vegetable and assorted sandwiches; coffee, tea and iced tea and for desserts cup cake, muffin and fresh fruits.

Volunteers

Nathy Orticio, Maria Andaluz, Tita Araquel, Mellie and Delfin Pojol, Lydia MacDonnell, Otto and Norma Duy (the chef.)

March 19, 2016 (118 guests)

Menu: Roasted turkey with the home made cranberry sauce, gravy for turkey, mashed potatoes and rice stuffing seasoned with sage, carrots and peas for vegetables. Desserts were apple and pumpkin pies with cold whip cream topping.

Volunteers

Nathy Orticio, Hazel Mendes, Virgie Evangelista, Rey Evangelista, Lani Domaloy, Tita Araquel, Otto Duy and Norma Duy

Donation of food came from the Salvation Army and Fairway Market.

Charles Au Lavoie

March 24, 2016