



Let Your Heart Rejoice

What Is the Donate-a-Meal Movement?

This movement invites people to reflect on those suffering from conflicts, disasters, and poverty in the world. By donating a portion of the money you might spend on meals or personal indulgences, you contribute, in the spirit of sharing, to the movement's activities.

The movement began in Japan in 1975 with people skipping one meal several times a month and donating the equivalent amount of money. Today, this is practiced in various ways worldwide and adapted to suit individual lifestyles. In this issue and next month's issue, we will introduce the voices of sangha members around the world who are practicing this movement.



Kayoko Wekarski
Florida Group, Risho Kosei-kai of New York

Ms. Wekarski with her granddaughter

“Every Sunday, I skip breakfast and put \$2 in the Donate-a-Meal box. Once a year, I offer the total amount as a donation to the New York Dharma Center. I chose \$2 because a ticket for the weekly Florida State Lottery costs the same price. Instead of buying a ticket, I add that same amount to the Donate-a-Meal box once a week.

In November 2016, Ms. Yuri Sugino, general affairs director of the New York Dharma Center, gave a lecture on the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Until then, I had only participated in the movement occasionally, whenever I happened to remember. After listening to her lecture, I felt encouraged to try doing it consistently. At that time, I was going through a financially difficult period, so when I had no cash, I would write down ‘\$2’ and the date on a piece of

paper and put it in the box as a placeholder. Then, when I had cash later, I would put the money in the box. My family also began contributing—whenever they found coins or had spare change, they would put it in the box. I am very grateful that my family started supporting the movement with me.

Through this practice, I have reflected on my lifestyle and learned to value money and material things more carefully.”



Mary Tracy Sigman
Fort Myers Group, Risho Kosei-kai of New York



Why the Donate-a-Meal Movement Is Important to Me

“Like many of you, I was given a small cardboard box by one of my Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma leaders and asked to get into the habit of placing the cost of a meal in that box. Ideally, I would also not eat that meal, so I could feel in a small way the hunger pains of a person truly without food to eat.

Sometimes I did that, but often I found that I would just donate some money at the end of the month towards the Donate-a-Meal campaign. I knew that Rissho Kosei-kai did great humanitarian work during crises around the world, and I wanted to support that.

In 2022 our home was nearly destroyed by Hurricane Ian in Florida. It took many days to get power restored, and even when it was restored the only cooking appliance that survived was our microwave. We ended up eating things like cold beans, canned tuna, and peanut butter for weeks. My husband and I lost weight but were still so grateful to be alive and have a place to rebuild and live. For the first time, I felt the pangs of hunger just a little bit and felt the suffering of those who are marginalized. While I always realized in my head that we are all interconnected and interdependent, I was feeling that now in my heart. Our dear neighbors helped us a great deal during those early days of recovery, and I will never forget the evening they had us over for dinner. It tasted so delicious! It was our first home-cooked meal in weeks, and it was wonderful. I vowed to never forget this feeling of connection with food.

So now when I make my monthly donation to the Donate-a-Meal Movement, I do it from my heart. I may forget to skip a meal that month, but I always remember that I had meals that month, and I want to help those who don't have anything to eat. I am so fortunate and grateful that Rissho Kosei-kai gives me the opportunity every month to be mindful of my connection with all my fellow living beings who are struggling to survive.”



Rev. Kevin Roche
Rissho Kosei-kai of San Antonio

“We are honored to share with you our ongoing commitment and heartfelt efforts in support of Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Movement, a campaign that continues to inspire compassion and action within our community.

Living in South Texas, we are keenly aware of the challenges many families face—extreme weather, economic hardship, immigration insecurity, and limited access to fresh, nutritious food. Participating in donations to the San Antonio Food Bank is a powerful way to support our neighbors and strengthen the fabric of our community. A single act of giving—whether it's a can of food, a few hours of volunteer time, or a heartfelt meal offering—can help ensure that no family goes hungry. It's a reminder that even in times of struggle, compassion can grow and flourish right here at home.

Each year, the San Antonio Dharma Center hosts a food collection drive to benefit the San Antonio Food Bank, guided by the spirit of the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Through the generous support of our members, we fill large barrels with non-perishable food items, contributing to a growing store of nourishment that is distributed to individuals and families facing food insecurity in our area.

Our commitment to this cause deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic. In those challenging years, our sangha members joined a volunteer initiative at a





local farm, sponsored by the San Antonio Food Bank. There, we helped plant, fertilize, and tend to garden produce—with our hands in the soil and our hearts in service. This work not only provided fresh fruits and vegetables to those in need but also strengthened our connection to the earth and to each other.

Each month, our membership donates \$100 to the San Antonio Food Bank to support the work Rissho Kosei-kai is doing to provide nutritional resources to members of our community.

In addition, after every sangha-wide meal or event, we donate any leftover food to members who are experiencing food insecurity.

These efforts reflect the core teachings of our faith: to embody compassion through action and to alleviate suffering wherever we can. We are deeply grateful to be part of a global sangha inspired by the vision and practices of Rissho Kosei-kai, and we look forward to continuing this work hand in hand with our brothers and sisters around the world.

With gratitude and humility.”



Graeme Cutting and Yuna Akiba
Rissho Kosei-kai of London

“We first became aware of the Donate-a-Meal Movement when we joined the London *hoza*. Soon after, Yuna took on the role of reminding members about the practice, which she continued to do for a while. Since then, we have carried on with the Donate-a-Meal practice and integrated it into our regular Dharma routine as one of the very important Six Paramitas, Generosity. Of course, along with making a charitable donation, the practice involves forgoing at least one meal on two days of each month, which we do try and manage as much as possible. However, we always remember to make a donation in our Donate-a-Meal box, which we keep in a prominent place in our home.

Certainly, a short fast does superficially focus the mind (albeit only very briefly!) on what it feels like to be hungry, but plainly, this is nothing like the feeling that someone in real, desperate need has day in and day out. It does, perhaps, at least make us appreciate how fortunate we are, and it helps keep the ideas of donation, empathy, and thankfulness regularly in our minds as we try to keep to the routine.

Another positive fact to mention is that all our donations reach people in need very quickly and efficiently through the Donate-a-Meal channels, which are very skilled at getting immediate assistance to places where there are famines, earthquakes, war zones, and other disasters across the world. We lived in Nepal for some years and always felt close to people who needed a lot of practical help to thrive, so the spirit of the Donate-a-Meal campaign does sit quite comfortably with us.

This is one of the very important practices of the Six Paramitas, and through the Donate-a-Meal program, we feel we can carry out, and hopefully spread, the spirit of donation and pray together for world peace.”

