

Meal Donation



“We donate meals to The Sophia Way every month, and we love it. It is the one time when my entire family comes together. It has now become a tradition and inculcates a sense of community giving in my kids. My daughter mentioned the meal-making process in one of her essays in school, and I was so touched. Thank you, The Sophia Way for giving my family and me an opportunity to come together and serve the community.”
~ Anne, a monthly meal donor

Thank you for your interest in supporting the women we serve through your meal donation.

At The Sophia Way, we are committed to treating the women with utmost dignity and respect. This means we serve them just as we would serve our family and friends. The average age of the women we serve is around 46 years. They are from different ethnic groups, and many have dietary restrictions. They usually get only one good meal each day and are always on the move, taking public transportation to places of shelter and warmth. That is why we focus on providing them hot, nourishing meals.

You can be a solo donor, or you can cultivate a circle from within your family, friends, workplace, place of worship, social network, neighborhood, etc. When thinking of meals be inclusive and neutral in the cuisines and dishes you choose to make.

An Overview

	Day Center: Breakfast	Day Center: Lunch	Night Shelter: Dinner	Emergency Shelter: Dinner
How many women	40	40	21	45
Hot or Cold	Cold	Hot	Hot	Hot
Time of Delivery	Between 8 and 10:30 a.m.	Between 8 and 10:30 a.m.	Between 6 and 6:30 p.m.	Between 8 and 8:15 p.m.
Location	Sophia’s Place, Behind St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, 3032 Bellevue Way NE, Bellevue, WA.			Please check our website for the location.

Cooking in a Group

Meal donation is a great activity for your family as well as for your circle or community (workplace, social groups, place of worship, neighborhood). It is also a fun way to involve children. They can be engaged in the entire process, from sign-up to delivery. Children that grow up around adults who prioritize caring for the community amidst career, social and personal demands learn valuable life skills and values. Men too can be part of it all, from planning to delivery, and meal donation is a great way for them to give back to women!

You and your group can sign up to do this once a month, make it a regular event, or do it occasionally!

Managing Your Circle

Many circles have Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups, etc. Some use email or just text.

You can also try signupgenious.com (it's free). The meal lead signs up on the calendar, sets up the "potluck," and sends invitations to the members. Members sign up and then it is all managed automatically! People can sign up for one or more items, or you can assign a dish, such as a salad to one or more people. You can assign delivery, shopping, etc. as tasks for people to sign up. You can specify their home address and the time by which food should be delivered at their home.

A manageable number for a group is having 5-6 people. Plan on 1-2 members not being to participate at any given time. Rotate the delivery responsibility, or assign it to a non-cooking member. Sometimes, some members might be unable to donate their time/effort, but they could do the shopping or handle the store-bought items. Be creative and flexible to make sure hot, ready-to-eat, and balanced meals reach the shelter on time.

Good to Know

- Due to building codes, meals cannot be cooked at Sophia's Place. We, therefore, ask you to bring a prepared meal. We have ovens, and dishes can be warmed/reheated and served.
- Meals must be ready-to-serve and ready-to-eat. Our kitchen at the shelter is only a warming kitchen. There is only enough time to warm up the food so please bring the food in as close to a ready-to-serve condition. If entrees or desserts are frozen, they will be served at a future meal.
- Our population is older and vulnerable – choose easy to digest meals.
- Provide choices and be inclusive and neutral in the cuisines and dishes.
- Look at following seasons & holiday menus. (Summer – fresh light meals; Fall – hearty soups)
- Specialty meals, such as Indian or Asian are enjoyed occasionally. The preference is usually for meals that include bread, meat protein, sides, salad, and dessert.
- Include (if possible) an ingredient list as some of the women have dietary restrictions /allergens.
- It is not necessary to bring plates, cutlery, and other serving essentials.
- Non-perishable items are always needed as women take snacks and portable food when they leave the shelter for their destination. (Cereal boxes, milk boxes, juice boxes, bottled water, cup-o-noodles, granola and protein bars, any ready-to-eat individual serving snacks)

FAQs

How do I sign up?

You can sign up on our [website](#) and choose a meal calendar.

Can I sign up for monthly donations?

Yes, you can sign up for a single meal donation, or a recurring donation. You can choose weekly, monthly, quarterly or any frequency you like. If you want particular days, such as birthdays or holidays, we recommend signing up early. Many of our donors are recurring donors, and many slots are booked in advance.

Tips for picking days: Pick a day in the near term that is available and that works for you. Weekends and summers are our slow times. If you can pick a slow time, that would be great. Pick days that are special for you, such as holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries. If you find a day you want is already booked, book a day near your day of choice.

What can I sign up for?

The individual calendar links will let you sign up for lunch at our [Day Center](#), or dinner for [Night Shelter Program](#) and [Emergency Shelter](#).

Can I be an on-call donor?

Yes. We will call you 48 hours before with the meal request. Remember, you don't have to say yes every time you get a call. This kind of support is huge, and we are deeply appreciative of our on-call donors.

How should we package the food for delivery?

It is better to bring a dish in three or four small casseroles instead of one big dish. This helps us to heat and serve the first dish while the others are staying warm in the oven. Please bring the food in disposable containers (aluminum trays are great).

Can I donate excess food? (After a party at my home or workplace)

Food served elsewhere can be served a second time at the shelter, provided there is space in the fridge to store the food. Please call the shelter at 425-896-7385 to check and coordinate delivery. Please keep the food frozen or refrigerated, and covered, until delivery.

Can we serve and eat with the women?

If you would like to serve food to the women:

Lunch at the Day Center: You must have a "food handler's permit" to serve the meal. If you are going to do this regularly, we ask you to attend our Volunteer Orientation. Please email volunteer@sophiaway.org for more details.

Dinner at the Emergency Shelter: Please sign-up on the calendar and if you would like to stay and serve, send an email to info@sophiaway.org a week prior to the date.

Dinner at Sophia's Place: We do not encourage donors to stay and serve as the women find it uncomfortable to have different company every night, at what is likely their only proper meal. Sometimes, we have women who are sensitive to male presence.

Menu Planning

Here is a list that one of our regular food donors, Sue Ford, came up with to help you if you are looking for some inspiration! This list is not all-encompassing, so please feel free to donate your favorite meal to cook or your favorite comfort food! Vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and soy free options or sides are always appreciated.

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Milk, coffee, tea Individual cereal/ oats packages Fruit Yogurt (individual sizes) Boiled eggs Sausage links cooked Protein bars and Trail mix (individual packets)	Sandwiches (tuna salad, egg salad, chicken salad, caprese, deli meats, and cheeses) Wraps Salads Soup Fruits, fruit juice	Protein entrée Some form of carbs Salad and or veggies Fruit or dessert Milk, tea, coffee, juice

Protein entree: baked or grilled chicken, brisket, meatloaf, ham, pork loin, pulled pork or chicken, turkey, meatballs, curry (meat, vegetable), chipotle bean burgers (Costco), Angus burgers (Costco).

Casseroles: chicken and rice, shepherd's pie, tuna, lasagna, vegetable lasagna, beef/chicken/cheese enchiladas, eggplant parmesan, mac and cheese, chili mac, beef stew, spaghetti and meatballs, beef stroganoff, baked beans, fried rice, biryani

Pasta, pizza, lasagna: These are served frequently, so the women appreciate food other than these.

Vegetables: fresh, or roasted with olive oil, salt, and pepper: peppers, onions, mushrooms, zucchini, yellow squash, beets, carrots, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, and asparagus. Frozen or canned veggies – green beans, corn, lima beans, mixed veggies, beets, edamame

Salads: spinach salad, quinoa salad, pasta salad, antipasto, macaroni salad, potato salad, fruit salad, Asian salad mix (Costco), kale Brussel sprouts salad mix (Costco). Don't add the dressing to the salad greens if possible. Deliver two bottles of dressing (Thousand Island or a vinaigrette) separately.

Soups: hamburger soup, lentil, split pea, vegetable beef, minestrone, chicken noodle, broccoli cheddar, vegetable soup (Costco), chicken tortilla (Costco), chili (with or without beans)

Desserts: Since the women could have diabetes or other medical restrictions, desserts that are healthier and fruit-based, low on sugar are good.

Potato bar: russet potatoes or a mix of potatoes with various fillings. Butter, cheese, broccoli, sour cream, bacon bits, scallions, chili. Potatoes can be wrapped in foil, baked in advance and kept warm in the beverage cooler. Just add a salad!

Taco bar: soft and hard taco, tortilla chips, various toppings – beans, rice, meat, corn, tomatoes, cheese, lettuce, sour cream, salsas

Other Information

Resources: Recipes

<https://www.cditchen.com/recipes/holidays-parties/cooking-for-a-crowd/>

<http://recipesforacrowd.com/>

Share your recipes with us!

Resources: Shopping

Costco: great place to pick up salads, meat entrees (frozen and prepared at home or hot, ready to go), some casseroles and veggie options, bread, desserts, etc.

Cash and carry – good for certain bulk grocery items

Fred Meyer, QFC: meat protein, ready to serve

Post-delivery

Tax receipts and matching your expenses: Estimate the cost of the food delivered and collect tax receipts from the staff at the shelter before you leave. If your employer matches donations, you can match the value of your donation! We really appreciate this.

Volunteer hours

If you would like credit for the hours (such as high school students), please write to volunteer@sophiaway.org. You can request credit for planning, shopping, cooking, and delivery, in other words, for all phases of the meal donation!

Matching your time

Please match your time, from sign up to shopping, prepping, cooking, coordination, and delivery, if your employer matches time. Please ask your circle members to do the same if their employers match time.

Questions: meals@sophiaway.org | (425) 896-7385 (response within 2 days)

For immediate help: (425) 463-6285

More information: <https://sophiaway.org/meals>

Do More for The Sophia Way

[Make in-kind donations](#) of new clothes, hygiene essentials, cleaning supplies

[Volunteer](#) at our office or the Day Center

[Take a Shelter Tour](#)

Thank you for being a part of The Sophia Way community!