



Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts

A volunteer initiative cooking free, healthy meals for people in need.

E-mail: media@emptykitchens.co.uk

Date:

03/11/2020

Headline:

250,000 meals provided to Edinburgh's vulnerable residents – no sign of food poverty slowing down

Location:

Leith, Edinburgh

Lead:

A Leith-based community organisation has provided over 250,000 fresh, healthy meals to people in Edinburgh.

Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts provides safe access to healthy food for local residents who would otherwise go hungry.

The Community Interest Company was founded in April as a direct response to the coronavirus crisis, which subsequently plunged many millions into food insecurity.

The organisation is run entirely by volunteers, who number more than 300. They rescue surplus food and transform it into free, healthy meals for daily delivery.

Body:

Why is a quarter of a million meals so important?

Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts started out in April 2020 with the intent to feed people who were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Demand for their services has increased dramatically in the intervening months. In the first three months they made 50,000 meals and then only a month later they hit 100,000 meals.

In the past week alone they have provided 2400 meals. There is no sign of the need abating.

Continuing with the current numbers, Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts is on track to provide 500,000 meals in the next six months.

The number of people experiencing food poverty is increasing. Food poverty is a state where individuals don't have enough money to buy food. Most often it entails making choices about what income can be spent on. This situation will be magnified intensely by the upcoming winter.

Lewis MacLachlan, the Founding Director of Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts, commented on the 250,000 milestone:

"With more and more food insecure citizens coming to us every day, and therefore our costs rising, we're obviously concerned about the future. If services like us stop, we don't know where people will get their next meal. The situation really is that dire."

Background:

The Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts system is designed to address the dual issues of food poverty and food waste.

Food is donated by restaurants, grocery stores, theatres, schools, allotments and even a research vessel.

To date, over 83 tonnes of food has been rescued and repurposed. This food would otherwise have gone to waste.

“I’m furious that I live in a city where thousands go to bed hungry whilst literal tonnes of food is turned into landfill, as it’s cheaper to throw it away than give it away.” said Founding Director, Lewis MacLachlan.

Every evening grocery stores donate their surplus produce and products. Volunteer packers and chefs sort through it and plan the weekly meals.

In the morning, volunteer packers construct Day Packs. A Day Pack contains three easily heatable meals, as well as fruit and a snack. These Day Packs are delivered across Edinburgh by a team of volunteer cyclists and drivers.

In addition, Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts run two daily hot food services from their home base at the Leith Theatre. They serve about 90 walk-in guests per day, though in the past week these numbers have increased to over 150.

Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts operates 7 days a week from 8AM to 10:30PM.

Without their services, 900 people would go hungry daily and tonnes of food would go to waste, rotting in landfills. They have also given meaningful opportunities to more than 600 volunteers who have found community and purpose in Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts.

“We simply can’t give up on what we’re doing now. The need is too great. This solution is a comparatively simple one: rescuing surplus food and turning it into healthy meals. It must be continued to solve hunger and food waste.”

About Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts:

Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts is a volunteer initiative that was founded in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts is a Community Interest Company taking food donations and converting them into breakfasts, lunches, dinners and snacks free of charge to those who need them most, with an additional twice-daily hot food service in Leith.

If you, or someone you know, does not have safe access to food, please contact Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts to arrange delivery, or visit their kitchen at Leith Theatre, [28 – 30 Ferry Road, EH6 4AE](#) for the hot meal service between 11:30 – 12:30 or 16:30 – 17:30 daily.

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Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts CIC (SC659115)

Leith Theatre, [28-30 Ferry Road, EH6 4AE](#)

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Please contact Sonya for more information or to organise an interview/ photo call.

LINKS:

www.emptykitchens.co.uk

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/full-hearts-fighting-food-poverty>

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/people/edinburgh-local-hero-awards-winners-are-announced-2999160>