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The Best Part of Thanksgiving

The smell of turkey, homemade pumpkin pie, gravy, mashed potatoes and stuffing fill the air of homes across the country.

As the end of November approaches, many return home for the holidays and enjoy a few days off for Thanksgiving, but for some there may not be family to turn to or much food to eat.

According to the 2013 Homeless Count Summary Report for the city of Long Beach, there is a total of 4,387 homeless people. So many people struggle daily to be able to eat and find shelter; you can only imagine the struggle on Thanksgiving.

On a holiday such as Thanksgiving, where are they supposed to turn to eat that storyline meal and gather around with their family?

“I strongly believe in giving back and my favorite time of the year is Thanksgiving and Christmas, so I always try to volunteer in some sort of community service,” said Kathryn Richelli.

The 21-year-old Cal State Long Beach student participated in “Serving With A Thankful Heart”last Thanksgiving at Ernest S. McBride Park. The organization served about 1,500 homeless people in the city of Long Beach and there is expected to be even more people this year.

The 6th Annual “Serving With A Thankful Heart”offers two separate servings, a lunch from 11:30-2 and a dinner from 5-7:30.

“It was honestly such a great experience, the people were so nice and I remember this little girl kept coming around and talking to me and wanted to a picture with me, she was the cutest thing. I loved every minute of it,” said Kathryn.

The food served was your traditional Thanksgiving meal, with seconds of course. Along with the great food came great music. A DJ was playing music, which called for some dancing.

Volunteers like Kathryn enjoyed serving the community with a special holiday meal as well as dancing, conversing, and mingling with those enjoying their Thanksgiving meal.

George Capjian, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine for the city of Long Beach, was among the volunteers at one of these Thanksgiving servings last year.

“All of the people who came for their Thanksgiving meal were so appreciative and sincerely thankful. I feel like we don’t see that genuine thankfulness as much as we should or show it as much as we could. We take things for granted more often than ever and participating in this community service event definitely opened up my eyes,” Kathryn said.

As Thanksgiving approaches and we head into the festive holiday season, we should also take this time to dive into the holiday spirit.

Whether it may be volunteering or donating to a toy drive for your community, any little thing can brighten up the holidays for those less fortunate than us.