

Frederick teens cook up grass roots food revolution

Lauren LaRocca

2007

Mike Teunis and David Krasner, longtime friends, both 16, both residents of Frederick and both employees at Quiznos were both concerned about the same thing: wasted bread.

While thousands of Americans go hungry, employees at Quiznos are required to cut and discard the ends of bread loaves for each sandwich served.

Solution? Organize a local chapter of Food Not Bombs, a grassroots movement that began in 1980 and has since spread across the globe.

Mike decided in February to organize the chapter in Frederick. "Just one day I was kind of like, this needs to be done," he said.

Less than a week later, he and the newly organized Frederick chapter served food during a Music For Unity show at the Cultural Arts Center in Frederick, where Quiznos' bread ends were finally eaten.

"We should be focusing on what's going on in our country," Mike said, "instead of asking our country for support."

He had been active in volunteering at the local soup kitchen each Saturday, while David had been involved in Music for Unity, a group that organizes music events and donates all proceeds to various charities and shelters.

Both are committed to promoting positivity in Frederick, a community, they said, that was "cool just five years ago."

"They're taking away everything," David said. "Kids have nothing to do."

The boys said gentrification is the root of the problem. Less than a year ago, skateboarders were free to skate around Frederick's city streets; now a skater is risking a fine or harassment if he or she skates.

Music, too, is being stripped from the youth, David and Mike said. A lot of venues would rather not cater to the high school-aged group.

The two work well together. Mike handles the logistics and, as Lost Tourists' bassist, Dave is the designated "PR guy," because he knows so many kids and local bands.

Local bands carry Food Not Bombs fliers and posters to show support, but most networking comes through MySpace and by word of mouth.

Although these two have been going strong, many others – more than 100 people, they said – have helped them in some way during the past few months.

The events have all gone relatively smoothly.

Food Not Bombs volunteers have been arrested in states that have laws against feeding the homeless. Maryland has no such legalities/rules, but both boys said they have been approached by local police – for "disrupting the peace."

"We don't say anything profane," Mike said, laughing. "We just sing songs and chant and stuff."

Food Not Bombs began as a way to protest nuclear weapons.

"Our country is more interested in spending money on guns instead of systems to distribute this food," Mike said.

He said it is our "Western world responsibility" to take the food we have and distribute it. He doesn't care who eats the food, just so long as it gets eaten.

"It's not all about feeding the hungry," David reiterated, "It's also about using food that otherwise would have been thrown away."

"And it really builds community," Mike said. "There's no hierarchy whatsoever. The website calls it 'practical anarchism.'"

The group serves vegetarian food only, for reasons obvious and not: meat spoils faster and they would be discriminating against vegetarians if they served meat.

Usually volunteers throw everything into crock pots and create some sort of stew or stir fry, then lug the pots to the designated location, the next being Warped Tour in Washington, D.C., where the group will serve food from 11 a.m. to noon.

find each other.



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