

## Hungry in Hungary

Once upon a time there were three travelers who came to town hungry, yet had no food. The villagers were unwilling to share their food with the hungry strangers, so the travelers went down to the river, filled a pot with water and dropped in a large stone. They placed it over a fire and, when asked what they were doing, they explained that they were making stone soup and would be happy to share it when it was cooked. They told one villager that, while they had the best recipe for stone soup, it would be much better with a few extra ingredients. Before long, a villager brought over some carrots to go into the soup. Then someone else showed up with some herbs to drop in the pot. After that, someone added some meat. Before long, the “stone soup” had turned into a full and hearty meal.

In the central part of District 7, in the heart of Budapest, is a restaurant called [Köleves](#). Translated, it means Stone Soup. Köleves is one of many local restaurants in Budapest’s District 7 which are working with [Heti Betevő](#), a local charity, to help feed the hungry.

It’s funny, most everywhere I travel, one of the most common volunteer opportunities I find is feeding the homeless and/or hungry. Perhaps funny isn’t quite the right word as, well, it’s sad that this need is so common. But it’s not all doom and gloom as, also wherever I go, I find caring people, not only willing, but eager to help.

Today I found those needy and caring people through the [Facebook page of Heti Betevő](#), Loosely translated Heti Betevő means “weekly good food staples,” which is exactly what they provide. Well, that and perhaps a little pick-me-up to show those in need that others care about them.

Heti Betevő is the brainchild of Bandi and his friends. One day Bandi, a cook at [Kisüzem](#), a restaurant in District 7, began speaking with his friends about how much food waste there is in the restaurant business. They all understood that, as in many large cities, there are people living on the streets (and in Budapest, also in the forest). And even if people do have the most basic flat, many can’t afford food. Many of us have had these same conversations and commented that someone should do something about it. Well, these people did. About a year ago, they began preparing food out of Kisüzem and serving it in the square out front. Before long, word spread.

These days, fifteen-to-twenty people meet every Sunday at 12:00noon at Kisüzem, which is used as a staging area. Various restaurants in the area take turns cooking the hot food which is then collected by volunteers. People drop by bringing fruit, cakes, loaves of bread and candy. After two-hours the sliced-bread, polished fruit, hot food, and coffee and tea are carried outside to the square where there’s a growing line of two-hundred people patiently waiting for what might be their only hot meal of the week.

“We don’t need to ask who they are or why they’re here,” says Hajnalka, one of the regular volunteers. “If they’re hungry, we should feed them.”

Each week, a different person is designated to lead the team. They assign different food stations and crowd control areas to volunteers and make sure all food is brought out and trash is collected following service. And Köleves and Kisüzem aren't the only restaurants involved. While Kisüzem acts as the staging area each week, many other restaurants in the area trade-off cooking duties. In addition, you can find Hete Betevő's collection jars at over forty-businesses in the area. The change people drop in is used to buy food, napkins, plastic-wear, cups and other supplies. And two-weeks ago, Hete Betevő became an official non-profit and can now accept financial donations in the form of checks or cash directly to them. They hope to expand to other parts of the city where they see great need.

I was lucky enough to join them and their wonderful group of volunteers this past weekend and, as I'll be in Budapest for at least the next few weeks, I plan to join them again. If you're in Budapest, they would love for you to share just a few hours of your week with them. All volunteers are welcome and, trust me on this, you'll meet amazing people and walk away with an incredible memory of your visit to Budapest.