

## TOUCHING THE INTANGIBLE

by ADRA NOWITZ

Upon introduction, I thought that Soul Graffiti was a hokey idea. It's a new-agey looking site that waxes on about the company's mission, which is to shift consciousness from material graffiti to a more spiritual graffiti. The term "graffiti" refers to something that is permanent, soulful and long-lasting. It's a pay-it-forward concept put into action, holding that one genuine act of kindness and love towards one person can mushroom into more good deeds and eventually make a universal impact.



When I called back to thank him, he said, "That's what Soul Graffiti is all about. Taking conscious action and making changes. Go do something for someone else now—keep it going." Suddenly Soul Graffiti didn't sound as peculiar as I thought it once had.

Soul Graffiti.com debuted in June 2003 and has quickly grown in popularity boasting over 65,000 hits monthly, drawing in readers from over 35 countries. The online community, called the "Soul Graffiti family," shares stories, volunteers and help toward the



JOSEPH POWERS

greater good of making the world a kinder place, full of love and compassion. The mission of Soul Graffiti is the belief that by increasing awareness of one's surroundings and performing conscious acts of kindness, as opposed to an unconscious act of

trying to merge is an aware and active act of kindness, but absently saying hello to your doorman every morning as part of a pattern is unconscious, and while still polite, is more cursory. Powers says, "When we act deliberately, the impact is far greater."

Underneath the stories of the Soul Graffiti family and Powers' inspiring newsletter that urges readers to try to understand the pattern of their life, there is a more important message, which is to take action. "The second step to affect change is to actually identify the pattern and change it, thereby move it from the subconscious to the conscious," Powers writes. The action and not just the inspiration is what separates Soul Graffiti from the Chicken Soup for the Soul and Tuesday with Morrie of the world — and perhaps it's the action that will make all the difference. Visit [www.SoulGraffiti.com](http://www.SoulGraffiti.com)

The recent MBA in me wondered how SoulGraffiti made any money, and how Joe Powers, the 27-year-old founder, even came up with a business plan for something so intangible. After all, making a mark on someone's soul or changing a life never made anyone rich. Yet, I didn't consider that maybe Soul Graffiti was looking for something more lasting than income, something that would make an impact greater than any price tag and create a permanent mark that would last like inked graffiti.

With a slow cadence and a patient and welcoming attitude, Powers explained Soul Graffiti to me. He began retelling seemingly generic stories about strangers doing good deeds for others and parables about how like attracts like and positive begets more positive. Still, I wasn't sold. "All people are connected. When we commit to doing acts of kindness every day, we have an effect that goes on and on. It's a sort of ripple effect," he remarked. Still, I wasn't fully convinced that the chain of good deeds that Powers kept talking about would continue.

As the conversation came to an end, I mentioned that I was due to be laid off soon from my job doing research at a nonprofit, and Powers was sympathetic and polite. However, like the message that Soul Graffiti is built on, he made a decision to take action on my behalf. Moments later, I was surprised to receive several e-mails from him offering me leads on jobs and contacts.

## Pitching In City Harvest Kosher Initiative

By Al iyah Vinikoor

City Harvest, established in 1981, helps feed about 200,000 of the estimated 1.5 million hungry New Yorkers each week. Their Kosher Initiative, led by manager Mayer Mayerfeld, has been contributing to the cause for the last four years, bringing kosher food to those in need through about 35 Jewish groups and agencies. One of the organization's fleet of 14 refrigerated trucks is dedicated to shuttling kosher perishables, produce and canned foods to the five boroughs, picking up and delivering food that would otherwise go to waste.



CITY HARVEST

"We distributed over 1.6 million pounds of food for kosher agencies last year," says Jane Mclean, director of food development at City Harvest. "45,000 people are served through our Kosher Initiative."

Mayerfeld says that in addition to all of City Harvest's staff being trained on laws of kashrut and how to look out for kosher products, Mayerfeld serves as  *mashgiach*  for the organization and trains staffers on the proper way to seal the food they receive for their kosher recipients. Most of the food that is picked up is from wholesalers — produce wholesalers and big kosher companies such as Ahava Dairy, Jack's Eggs, and Agree processors—though City Harvest also receives a good portion of canned goods and non-perishables from food drives and individuals. Restaurants, greenmarkets and catered parties also donate. Jewish schools, such as Yeshiva University, Ra-

maz, and Manhattan Day School are all regular donors. Special events, such as Kosherfest in November, are also a big generator of kosher products to be donated.

"We try to focus on people in the Jewish community who need assistance," says Mayerfeld. "Families, immigrants, homeless shelters, single-room-occupancy hotels, the elderly."

During the holidays, need for kosher food increases by nearly 100 percent. Mayerfeld says that they make a point of delivering holiday-appropriate foods seasonally as well. For this last Rosh Hashanah, they delivered 35,000 apples, and they deliver potatoes and onions for Hanukkah.

Mayerfeld also runs Operation Frontline, which brings chefs and nutritionists to

train people on how to cook healthfully, and provides them with a stipend to buy such food.

Volunteers are the heart of City Harvest. They help with deliveries and office work, collect surplus food, line up new food donors, and organize food drives. Food and monetary donations are welcomed, and volunteers can serve on City Harvest's Street Fleet, collecting food donations under 20 pounds from restaurants and delivering them within the hour to a program that serves the hungry.

Volunteers are should to contact City Harvest's affiliate agencies. Such agencies involved in the Kosher Initiative include the Jewish Service Coalition and the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty.

Visit [www.cityharvest.org](http://www.cityharvest.org) or email [mayer@cityharvest.org](mailto:mayer@cityharvest.org).