

Reading Town Meal: please lend a helping hand

Reading's favourite family event, Reading Town Meal, is fast approaching and calling on you to help out on the day.

Mary Richardson, who has volunteered at three previous Town Meals, said 'Sharing a meal is one of the best ways of showing someone you care about them and that's what's at the heart of the Town meal. It's why it is such a great event to be involved in.'

The Reading Town Meal will take place on Saturday 1st October 12pm-4pm at the beautiful Forbury Gardens. The event itself consists of the wonderfully talented students from Reading College cooking a free meal for over 1000 people, which has been solely grown by green-fingered Reading locals. The day will also be packed full of entertainment from local artists, workshops and popular local traders.

In order to make the event as successful as it can be we are calling on everyone and anyone to come lend a helping hand on the day. Slots for volunteers start from as little as two hours and include; helping pre-event to decorate the Gardens, organising the car park, supervising and handing out leaflets to encourage everyone to get down to Forbury Gardens. There really is something to suit everybody's skillset.

To be able to sign up to help on this fun-filled day you can email volunteers@readingtownmeal.org.uk or fill in a sign-up sheet <http://www.readingtowntownmeal.org.uk>. In return for volunteering at Reading Town Meal you will have the pleasure of indulging in the free meal, as well as helping contribute towards the success of the event. Without your help events like this would not be possible .

If you are unable to make Saturday 1st October, we are also looking for people to join our team on Friday 30th September to help put the marquees up, as well as general help with publicity.

Notes for Editors:

1. The Town Meal Steering Group is organising this event and comprises:
Food4Families (a BIG lottery funded project managed by Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC)), Reading College, Reading Food Growing Network, Reading Borough Council Culture & Sport Services, True Food Community Cooperative, Transition Town Reading, Reading Voluntary Action and other volunteer members.
2. Food4Families aims to work with communities across Greater Reading to increase the amount of food grown locally and sustainably and has created 20 community gardens across Reading where people learn how to grow their own food under the guidance of professional tutors
3. RISC is the biggest Development Education Centre in the UK, working with schools and community groups to build understanding of sustainable development and promote social justice.
4. Reading Food Growing Network aims to promote and expand locally grown food through sharing knowledge, information and ideas alongside advice and support to local growers
5. Reading College Hospitality, Travel & Tourism department are contributing their expertise and use of kitchen facilities where their catering students will prepare and cook the Town Meal, which they will then serve in Forbury Gardens.
6. Transition Town Reading is a local group of the UK network that aims to promote resilient local economies and co-ordinate the transition of our community to one that is less reliant on fossil fuels; has a smaller carbon footprint and reduces the impact of climate change.
7. True Food Community Cooperative is a social enterprise, owned and run by its members, that enables its members and others to buy affordable organic food and other produce and supports local food production.
8. Reading Voluntary Action (RVA) promotes strength within Reading's voluntary and community sector. RVA's Development worker, Community Involvement, Rachel Goater works to increase the number of people who are active in communities around Reading by improving communication and ensuring people know how and where they can get involved in social groups, community events, sports, volunteering and democracy.
9. Reading Borough Council is supporting the event through logistical advice and support.

10. Each of the previous Reading Town Meals held in 2011 , 2013, and 2015 have served over 1,000 people with a free hot lunch cooked from tasty local ingredients grown locally, and filled Forbury Gardens with stalls and activities all celebrating local, sustainable food. A short film of the first Reading Town Meal can be seen here <https://vimeo.com/36269113>