

Serving Those Who Served with PATHCooks

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Los Angeles has the highest population of homeless veterans in the United States. Proskauer's Los Angeles office supports several programs that provide direct assistance to LA's homeless veterans, including [PATHCooks](#). Several times a year, Proskauer volunteers plan and serve dinner to the residents of PATH's Westside Center through the PATHCooks program. PATH's Westside Center provides interim housing to get homeless veterans off the streets as quickly as possible while they work with the Veterans Administration and PATH staff to move into permanent homes or treatment centers. PATH's Westside center has 32 beds for male veterans.

We volunteer with PATHCooks several times throughout the year, adding additional dates around the holidays, Veterans Day, during the summer when LA office summer associates can participate, and just after the arrival of the first year class. Our volunteers include attorneys, staff and Proskauer family members. At each dinner, we generally have 5-6 volunteers to cook and serve dinner for the 30+ Westside Center residents. Feedback from the volunteers is incredibly positive, and we have several attorneys and staff who make the effort to volunteer as often as their schedule allows. Rita Rausch, Professional Resources Specialist in the LA office, coordinates Proskauer's volunteer efforts with PATHCooks and is our most frequent volunteer.

Our Proskauer volunteers choose the menu for each dinner. Some of our more popular meals are pulled pork sandwiches, sloppy joes, brisket and spaghetti and meatballs. Josh Furey, LA's Office Technology Support Manager, frequently smokes the meat himself, taking hours the day before to purchase supplies and start the smoking process. We always make a fresh salad and serve a variety of beverages. We serve pie, cookies or ice cream for dessert - often with a seasonal flair. We buy our supplies on the day of the dinner at Smart & Final, a long-time Proskauer client.

The Westside Center has a restaurant-quality kitchen and supplies. We arrive about an hour or two before mealtime and start cooking. While PATH staff is present to assist, Proskauer volunteers do all of the cooking, preparation and serving of the meal. At 6pm, the veterans are called to dinner.

After most of the veterans have been served meals, we make our own plates and join the veterans in the dining room. Spending time with the veterans is my favorite part of volunteering. I've had many conversations with Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps veterans who have served in every conflict from the Korean War and after. They often have compelling stories - of heroic service and sacrifice - followed by a struggle to find their footing in civilian life. They are invariably gracious, always thanking us for our time and the meal, and I am invariably humbled and heartened by the strength and kindness of those we serve.

For information on The State of the American Veteran, please visit the [USC Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families](#).

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