

## Ottawa Mission serves up Thanksgiving dinners

By [Darren Brown](#), *Ottawa Sun*

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As he hunches over the steaming plate, he points to his neck.

His back hurts, he says; it's been hurting for three days, ever since he ran out of smokes.

But nearing the end of his Thanksgiving Dinner at The Mission in downtown Ottawa, Michael Merlin, with the strain of days gone by written between the lines on his face, is thankful for days like today.

In a little over five hours on Monday, about 2,600 dinners hit the lips of those who are homeless, hungry or alone.

All in all, 2,300 lbs. of turkey, 600 lbs. of ham, 400 lbs. of mashed potatoes, 225 assorted pies, 200 dozen dinner rolls and 50 gallons of giblet gravy were served up from a bustling kitchen.

For James, who's been out on his own for the past three years, the struggle doesn't get easier.

“(It’s) kinda rough but I’m grateful that there’s Thanksgiving dinner here. I think it’s really nice people have a good heart to volunteer here.”

Volunteer Samantha Memedoska knows how important places like The Mission are to those in need.

“You’ve got people around you who are in the same situation and then you’ve got (support staff) who are here to help so you know there are people out there who are willing to be there for you and willing to help you make a change or just keep living.”

Finishing his meal, James reflects on his situation. He is hopeful for a new job, a better apartment and more reasons to be thankful.

[darren.brown@sunmedia.ca](mailto:darren.brown@sunmedia.ca)