

EVENTS/CAUSES

Four Seasons continues tradition of giving dinner, saying “thank you”

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Thanksgiving on the Mayflower photo

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Four Seasons Hotel Washington is once again thankful for the public servants who keep communities safe and healthy.

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"Thanksgiving on the Mayflower" is an annual tradition in which the hotel provides dinners for the city's public servants. Repeatedly returning to a good cause establishes Four Seasons as a role model both within its industry and to consumers.

"Thanksgiving on the Mayflower was founded on the concept of giving thanks to the city's public servants who selflessly care for and protect its residents," said Liliana Baldassari, director of public relations at Four Seasons, Washington, DC. "We continue this long standing tradition because to us it is very important to personally say 'thank you' not only regularly throughout the year to all the service men and women but especially on this family day to those that have to work on Thanksgiving and are unable to be with their loved ones during this special holiday.

"After so many years, they now look forward to joining us at Four Seasons for a hot traditional meal and year after year are grateful that we continue this event," she said. "We personally recognize many of the police officers, firemen and emergency room operators and are able to do so because as fellow members of the community we have frequent communication; that helps them to not only feel welcome but to know that they are among friends, family and neighbors and are a special part of our community."

Giving thanks

For the majority of the United States labor force, Thanksgiving is a holiday spent with family and a day off work.

However, police officers, firefighters, hospital workers, first-responders and park police are among the many people obligated to perform their duties even while hundreds of millions stay home and feast. The Washington hotel is showing its thanks for these workers' dedication by providing meals to them.



"The more traditional way to celebrate Thanksgiving is with with family and friends at home, but we also know that not everyone can take off work during this holiday, especially public servants and emergency room staff," Ms. Baldassari said. "It is for this reason that we created this event to ensure that those serving our community enjoy a home style cooked Thanksgiving meal amongst co-workers and our Four Seasons family in a peaceful setting even though it is not in a family living room, we like to think of the hotel as the neighborhood's living room where the entire community can gather.

"Again, although the hospitality industry employees lead a similar lifestyle as our public servants in that they too must work on holidays, this less about work and more about community are evidenced by the fact that many employees volunteer their time, come in to serve even though they are not scheduled or required to work and even bring other family members and friends to participate in this great event," she said.

Executive chef Douglas Anderson and executive pastry chef Charles Froke will prepare more than 800 pounds of food including 300 pounds of turkey in addition to specialties such as butternut squash soup, green bean casserole and more than 100 pies. Diners can top off their turkey, ham and potatoes with a combined total of 40 gallons of cranberry juice and 16 gallons of gravy.



Thanksgiving on the Mayflower promotional image

The diners will be hosted within a 53-foot repurposed Mayflower truck donated by the storage and moving company of the same name. The Mayflower is also the name of the ship that brought the English Separatists to Plymouth Rock in 1620. The "First Thanksgiving" happened in 1621 in a peaceful collaboration between the "pilgrims" and Native

Americans to commemorate an especially fruitful harvest.

In reference to this history, Mr. Bernand and hotel manager Kelley Moreton will be dressed in traditional pilgrim garments, with one staff member dressed as Pocahontas and another as a turkey. An additional 30 or more employees and families will give out 350 dinners and 150 to-go meals for the workers.



Repurposed Mayflower truck

Chief Fred D. Morris from the Risk Management Division of Washington Fire & EMS shared his gratitude in a statement, saying, "I certainly want to thank you all for your acts of kindness to me, and all of us here at DC Fire & EMS. Your hospitality is first class. The type of kindness that you show us at Four Seasons Hotel Washington is deeply appreciated by us emergency responders every year during this holiday season."

Although this initiative has no direct benefit to consumers, it shows that Four Seasons is a socially conscious and generous brand. Giving back with a similar event each year shows the brand's seriousness and dedication where one-offs and trendy events might read as publicity stunts.



K-9 unit officers and Four Seasons turkey

To consumers, a hotel's job is to take care of people, so it is especially important in the industry to showcase good will. Charitable and philanthropic efforts continue to grow ([see story](#)), as do environmental actions ([see story](#)).

"The Mayflower builds authenticity because we were the first and only organization to host this type of event in DC that specifically recognizes the city's public servants," Ms. Baldassari said. "Maintaining this image is most important during Thanksgiving as we follow our founder's Golden Rule to treat others as you would like to be treated."

"But, this truly is more than simply maintaining an image and following a rule," she said. "We are all part of this great community and this has become a natural part of how we engage and interact with our community."

Bigger than life

Other Four Season properties are also reaching out to those whose holidays are blighted by less fortunate

circumstances.

This November, Four Seasons Hotel New York and Waldorf Astoria New York are working together to extend holiday cheer to the underprivileged.

Fare Share Friday, organized by Crossroads Community Services, will take place the day after Thanksgiving. Holidays are thought of as cheerful times spent with family, but countless homeless, orphaned or otherwise disadvantaged people are too often neglected in the celebration ([see story](#)).

Events such as Fare Share Friday unite competitors for larger and more important causes, something brands in all industries should work to do.

Corporate social responsibility may be about relationship building rather than transactions, but that makes it more important for brands, not less, according to Christie's executive at Luxury Interactive Europe 2015 in London Oct. 27.

The speaker offered a number of tips for brands looking to improve or get started on CSR, offering a number of Christie's stories as support. In addition to quality craftsmanship and great service, being a luxury brand means using a highly visible and admired position to fulfill moral and ethical responsibilities ([see story](#)).

"Four Seasons as a company has always been committed to social responsibility and ensures that its 95 hotels and resorts in 41 countries support the communities they serve," Ms. Baldassari said. "One of the reasons this is important is because the employees of our respective hotels are part of that community and the type of employees the hotel hires are service oriented involved members of that community. By being involved in the community, our employees and guest appreciate our efforts and proactively look forward to participating and giving back.

"It is important for luxury hotels to be responsible role models because it shows that they care about the local community that included their staff by giving back in many ways."

Final Take

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