

**ESP Meets PechaKucha**  
**Presented by Maili Bailey on April 26, 2013**

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This is about a soup kitchen called **The Evening Sandwich Program**. It is fondly known as **ESP**.

The formula you see here:

$$P = H * [1 - I] * G$$

Index of Poverty  
(simplified)

is from Amartya Sen who won a Nobel Prize with it. It scientifically represents the values of a culture. Sen showed that even poor societies can improve the condition of their people. He said that societies that attend to the poorest of the poor can save lives. Sen studied what happened in India in 1943 when the British ran the place. The poor could not afford the inflated price for food in the booming economy; they were neglected and millions starved. The British simply didn't notice. The British were unsympathetic with the Irish, too. The British are the subject of another talk, longer than five minutes.

In 1990 ESP was started by members of the Universalist Unitarian Church who had heard that people were seen looking in dumpsters for food. Two students from Colby College raised almost \$1500 to help get the program started. St. Mark's Episcopal Church and the First Congregational Church soon were on board and today **free** take-out meals are served five days a week by many volunteers. Another night will be available soon as well.

The soup kitchen is beautiful in many ways: there have been 1700 volunteers over these past 23 years. People have come from as far as Fairfield and Winslow and as near as your neighbor's house to work the program: honor societies and sports teams; Colby; youth groups from campus and other organizations; retired people; people of all faiths, including atheists; people doing community service for the courts; passersby who see that I am struggling to bring in boxes of stuff from my car; and many others! **And you say you've never heard of the Evening Sandwich Program?!**

Hear this:

451,000 meals have been made and given away in the small kitchen of the UU Church. People come in between four and five o'clock and we put food into a bag and off they go. We ask no questions. No one has to qualify. We don't know who they are. Once in a while a customer will take more than they need, and we gently remind them that there are others to be fed as well, but usually we don't stress ourselves about these things. In good times it is good to put something by for the bad times, like the next morning when a sandwich would be good.

Some days we serve 70 meals and some days we may serve 249 meals! We really never know. We keep track of the weather conditions in our log book, and make a mental note of when

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social security checks might come in, but no pattern has ever been found. They come in the rain and snow. They come when they need us. Lots of children come. We are glad they feel safe enough to do so.

How have we done this work for this long? We've taken little steps. We put serious ingredients into big pots and make soup. In winter people cook beans for me. A farmer may give us big onions and potatoes. Volunteers chop and dice. Government surplus foods go into the pot. Chickens get boiled. A friend will cook a turkey. Someone makes egg salad and brings it in. Peanut butter and jelly are donated by friends of the program. A family pack of hamburger makes a big pot of American Chop Suey. It is all good.

So, what does one do in the face of monumental evil? Years ago, I would have felt helpless and angry if I had heard the story about India and the British. I know that world hunger is so much bigger than I can imagine! At our soup kitchen we have been looking evil in the eye and have been making peanut butter and banana sandwiches. **We laugh in the face of evil! We have knocked it down to size and do not despair. We can do 249 meals a day if we have to, and make justice real.**

Nobel laureate Sen had his formula, and we have one that everyone can understand:

**ESP**