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'Random Acts of Pizza' sent to thank Boston-area first responders in wake of bombings, manhunt

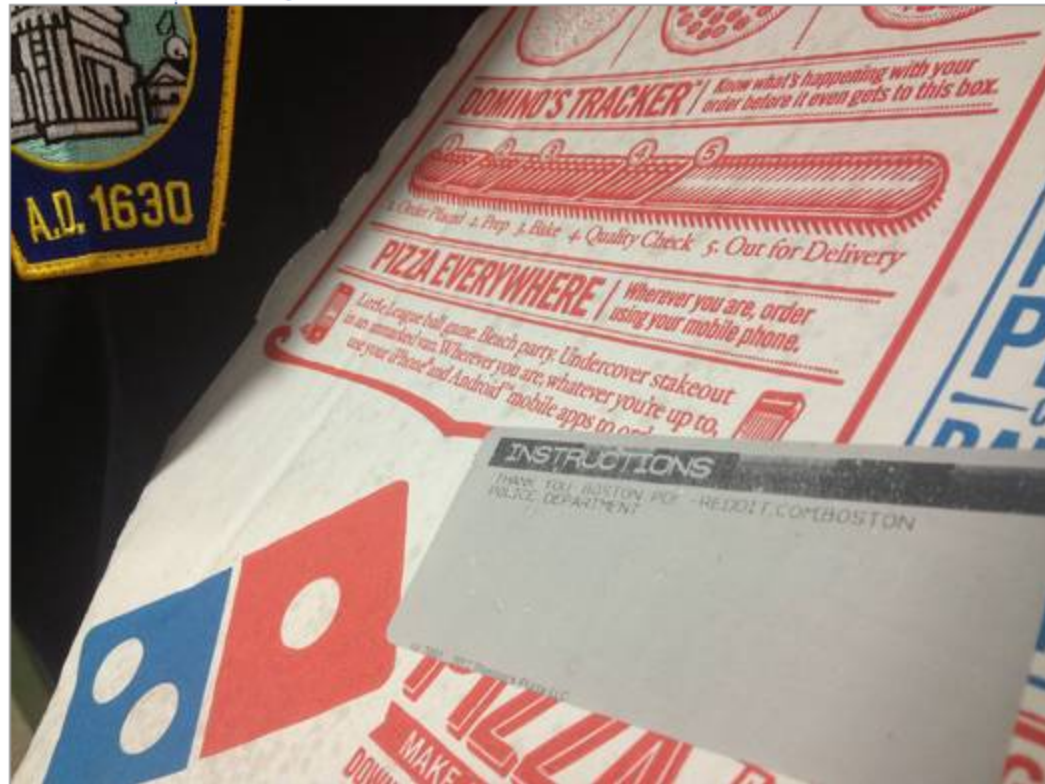
Posted by Matt Rocheleau April 22, 2013 03:27 PM

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By Andrew Ba Tran and Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondents

First responders in dozens of Boston-area communities are getting free shipments of food – primarily pizza – sent by people from across the globe who are eager to show their admiration and gratitude for the tireless work of the past week to treat victims, secure neighborhoods and track down two men who allegedly bombed the Marathon.

The meals and other treats are being delivered to Boston, Watertown, Cambridge, and other local police officers, State Police troopers, FBI and other federal officials, area EMTs and emergency dispatchers, nurses and doctors.

Much of the effort has been coordinated online, through [social media](#) and websites like [Reddit.com](#). The campaign has been nicknamed “Random Acts of Pizza,” which has its own website, www.randomactsofpizza.com, which is described as a “sub-community” of Reddit.

Ben Schimizza, a 26-year-old engineer from Cincinnati, said he saw visitors r/RAOP asking for some organization. “I’m pretty handy with spreadsheets as part of my day to day, so I thought I’d contribute that way and it’d be a good collaboration,” he said.

He created the public document Friday night and left for a day trip the next morning. When he checked it later, he saw the online community had refined the approach with hundreds of contributors. More delivery venues were added, as well as different emergency response agencies and all the different offices.

“We just wanted to make sure to spread the wealth around and get people covered: Police departments, dispatch, hospitals,” said Schimizza. “Boston people added better pizza places than Dominos.”

The MIT Police Department has had pizza deliveries from people as far away as California, Florida, and Northern Ireland.

“We’ve seen probably every piece of pizza that the Boston and Cambridge area has to offer,” said Sgt. Dave O’Connor.

The random acts of kindness toward the campus police have extended beyond

The random acts of kindness toward the campus police have extended beyond food. People have brought flowers to the station. Children have asked to hang up drawings in their front office. MIT students have built a memorial for Sean Collier by the Stata Center where he was shot.

“It’s just been beautiful, it’s what’s making it possible to get the strength to get through all this,” said O’Connor. “Overwhelming. Overwhelming is the only way I can think to describe it.”

Local hotels, restaurants, and catering companies have reached out, as well.

“They’re calling us to schedule it out, to know when is a good day to drop stuff off,” he said.

People have organized the free food delivery schedules using online resources, including Google Documents, which has allowed participants to keep track of the departments, stations, bureaus, hospitals and other locations where food has been sent and where it hasn’t.

Erin Kilpeck, 39, heard about [the Google Doc](#) from her home in Vermont.

Kilpeck said she and her husband are first responders. Her father was a police officer and was the first in the family to send food to the MIT police department. Her brother has scheduled food to be delivered to MIT police Monday and she said she ordered the “Patriot and Red Sox Catering Platter” for dispatchers at Boston Emergency Medical Services.

She said this was the first time she had heard of an organized effort to thank emergency officials by feeding them.

“Being an EMT and being in that field, I understand the stress that they’re going through,” said Kilpeck. “It would be nice sometimes if there was food waiting back at our station.”

Abby Hunt, a spokeswoman for the food-ordering website GrubHub, said their company helped facilitate more than 300 orders donated to first responders over about three-and-a-half days.

On Marathon Monday, shortly after the online food donation campaign began, officials at GrubHub learned of the effort and teamed up with Cambridge-based

restaurant [Anytime Pizza](#) to help, she said.

Between last Monday and Thursday, Grubhub waived fees it normally would charge the restaurant, the spokeswoman said. The website also shared the restaurant's information on its social media sites to boost awareness of the donation campaign.

The restaurant directed donation orders to be placed via GrubHub using a default delivery address of 55 Fruit St. Boston, MA 02114 and typing "DONATION" in the special instructions field, Hunt said. The restaurant then worked with local organizations, authorities and hospitals to figure out where the donated orders were most needed.

The 300-plus orders ranged from a \$10 pizza to more than \$500 for one order, said Hunt.

One order in particular "really caught our attention," she said. "In fact, a few of the customer service reps cried as they saw the order come in."

The order's special instructions read: "To our brothers and sisters in Boston: thank you for all you do and know our thoughts are with you and your city tonight. With love and respect, the South San Francisco Police Department out in CA."

Hunt said the orders came from across the country. Popular cities that orders originated from included: Boston, New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and Baltimore.

She noted that more food was likely donated in other ways, using GrubHub and a variety of other means.

On [Reddit.com](#), a user under the name "[BPD_MURICA](#)," said they are a Boston Police officer and thanked the online community for their generosity.

"Your kind gesture of sending us pizza is greatly app[r]eciated!," the user wrote. "none of us really use reddit so hopefully this is posted in the right place. Thank you again!!"

For the latest and complete coverage of the Boston Marathon bombings, visit [Boston.com](#)

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(GrubHub)

A map shows where donation orders were placed through one specific, three-and-a-half day effort last week that was facilitated by food-ordering website GrubHub.com and Cambridge-based restaurant Anytime Pizza.

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