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THE GOOD LIFE

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Aching Feet and a Full Heart

By *Lynne Feldman, MBA,*
Director of Community Services

One of my first volunteering experiences as a young adult was with “The Meatloaf Kitchen,” an all-volunteer organization that serves people experiencing homelessness in New York City. The place was infused with the familiar, homey aroma of meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and cooked vegetables, juxtaposed into a setting that was entirely new to me—seeing people who depended on the kindness of strangers for their evening meal. I served guests food and drink at long tables covered with red-checked tablecloths. I washed pots and pans. I remember a feeling of deep belonging and peace being at that hot, steamy sink amidst all the other people working in concert to serve the community.

When people come together to work towards a common goal, they develop a sense of unity and belonging.

This connection fosters trust and cooperation among community members, making neighborhoods safer and more supportive places to live. By volunteering, we contribute to the collective well-being of our community and help create a more vibrant and resilient society.

Volunteering also cultivates empathy and compassion towards others. I remember feeling awed and humbled while serving our guests. By engaging directly with individuals facing challenges or hardships, volunteers gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives and experiences. Through volunteering, people learn to see beyond themselves and embrace the diverse humanity that unites us all. This development of my empathy skills set me on a track to serve others throughout my career in nonprofit work.

Later, I delivered Meals on Wheels in New York City. I remember pushing carts of meals into high-rise elevators, delivering meals to each floor. A lot of the people I served lived alone, and despite being in one of the most densely populated places on earth, were deprived of social interaction due to being homebound. Some people peeked out their doors and accepted the meals with a quick “thank you,” while others wanted you to stay and chat. They shared stories of their families, work, and serving in wars. I remember

struggling with wanting to stay longer, enjoying those conversations, keenly aware that the others’ meals sat cooling in the rack. I tried to keep my chats to 5 minutes, promising to be back soon.

Volunteering with Meals on Wheels helped me develop good communication skills. Through volunteering, we learn to listen attentively, express ideas clearly, and work cooperatively with others. These communication skills are essential for building healthy relationships and succeeding at work.

These efforts also instilled in me an awareness of the awesome breadth of human experiences. At the end of these volunteer shifts, my feet hurt and my heart felt full. Volunteering provided me a sense of purpose and fulfillment, knowing that I was making a difference in the lives of others. This sense of accomplishment reached into other areas of my life and motivated me to continue serving. I felt empowered to take on new challenges and pursue my goals.



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Director of Community Services

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Now, my teenage son and I volunteer together at a local festival each year, in hopes of planting a new seed of the spirit of

giving and receiving. Whether it’s the joy of helping others, the friendships forged along the way, or the sense of community shared with fellow volunteers, the memories created through volunteering will be cherished for years to come. These experiences serve as reminders of the positive impact we can have on the world when we come together to lend a helping hand.



SHINE Regional Program Director Lorraine York-Edberg hands out gifts to SHINE volunteers at an April 2 appreciation luncheon.

National Points of Light Message for Volunteer Appreciation Week
(April 21-27, 2024)

“Shining a Light on the People and Causes that Inspire Us to Serve.”

LifePath is Giving a ‘Shout Out’ to its 250 Volunteers Building Bridges to the Nearly 9,000 People LifePath Serves in Franklin County and Beyond.

We couldn’t do it without YOU!
Thank you,
From All of Us