

## **The Healthy Benefits of Volunteering**

Roger Jimenez

For the past 40 years, the Food Bank of Yolo County has been committed to fighting hunger in Davis, Woodland and the immediate surrounding areas. Through this monthly feature column, we hope to reach our objective to not only feed people, but to feed people *well*. Centered around themes like: “Nutrition and Hunger,” “Public Policy” and “Disaster Relief,” we will offer readers compelling content, while simultaneously providing a forum for meaningful discussion about health and wellness issues that are of particular interest to our community.

Since the Nation recognizes volunteers in April, my article is on volunteers. We have been extremely fortunate for the number and quality of people that volunteer at the Food Bank. We are forever grateful for the help volunteers give us. I will only focus on work volunteers do in the warehouse, although we have volunteers help out in just about everything we do at the Food Bank.

Volunteers assist our drivers pickup food from our donors. They assist the driver in delivering food to the many distribution sites we serve throughout Yolo County. They pack boxes and bags of food for distribution. Volunteers wash vehicles, clean the warehouses, do basic janitorial to help keep the office and bathrooms clean. They help at distribution sites in distributing food. Volunteers help with restocking, moving food from one warehouse to another, and with some of the tracking we do in the movement of food, such as receiving and distributing. In short, in just about any activity involved in carrying out our mission, volunteers help.

To most people, a "volunteer" is someone who contributes time to helping others with no expectation of pay or other benefit. However, this does not mean that volunteers get no benefit from their volunteer work. Studies have shown that helping others benefits the donor and the recipient.

Medical scientists are also beginning to discover that there is healing power in helping others. This research has produced some startling results. For example, Harvard psychologist David McClelland measured a particular antibody in students before and after watching a film on Mother Teresa, the Nobel Prize laureate, for her work helping the homeless. Dr McClelland found that merely watching a film on selfless service strengthened the immune response in the students. Here are a few reasons to volunteer (The following list taken from: “*Ten Professional Development Benefits of Volunteering* (Everything I Learned in Life I Learned through Volunteering). Mary V. Merrill, LSW, Merrill Associates):

### **Learn or develop a new skill**

Volunteering is the perfect vehicle to discover something you are really good at and develop a new skill. As Mahatma Gandhi said, “Live as if you were to die tomorrow”.

### **Motivation and sense of achievement**

Fundamentally, volunteering is about giving your time, energy and skills freely.

### **Boost your career options**

If you are thinking of a career change then volunteering is a perfect way to explore new fields.

### **New interests and hobbies**

Sometimes we do get locked into the “rat-race” of life and volunteering can give that escape to everyday routine and create a balance in our lives.

**New experiences**

Volunteering is a brilliant way to get life experience.

**Meeting a diverse range of people**

Volunteering brings together a diverse range of people from all backgrounds and walks of life.

**Inspire others...**

Show people what you are passionate about and maybe you will inspire them too!

*The Food Bank is located at 1244 Fortna Avenue, Woodland, CA 95776. For more information about how you can get involved in the fight to alleviate hunger and malnutrition in Yolo County, please contact the Food Bank at 530.668.0690 or visit: [www.foodbankyc.org](http://www.foodbankyc.org).*

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