

FOOD FOR ALL DC



OCTOBER NEWS - VOLUNTEER COUPLES

We all know that giving back to your community by donating your time is food for the soul. A wealth of evidence shows that volunteering supports our mental well-being, helping to stave off loneliness and depression. There are positive physical effects, as well. The American Heart Association points to evidence showing that volunteering has positive effects on blood glucose levels, cholesterol, and even blood pressure.



If volunteering is so good for us individually, imagine what it can do for our relationships with others. The Pew Research Center found that nearly two-thirds (64%) of adults they surveyed cited “having shared interests” as the most important factor in the success of a relationship. When you factor in the positive effects that volunteering can have on you personally, as well as the benefits of sharing interests with your partner, it’s no wonder many couples choose to volunteer together. Food For All DC has a few dynamic volunteer duos, and we’re highlighting them in this month’s newsletter.

JANA & TOM – A FAMILY WITHIN A FAMILY

Jana started volunteering as a driver with FFA during the Covid days. She wanted to make a small contribution to people’s lives during that challenging period. As a retired grief counselor, she had the time and empathy, and she enjoyed being able to provide groceries to such nice recipients. She was also happy to link up two of her previous clients with FFA.

Tom joined Jana soon thereafter to carry the heavy bags to people’s doors. They quickly figured out that the most efficient way for them to work together was for Tom to drive and Jana to navigate and text and/or call the clients. They love driving around the city together, accompanied by their rescue dog, Gaven. Even though they have lived in DC for 40 years, there is always another nook or cranny to explore.



Jana and Tom enjoy the connection with FFA's recipients. They especially appreciate both their warmth and emotional honesty. Sometimes people open up about their lives and struggles. Jana is in awe of their resilience. Even when facing physical disability and/or other challenges, people find a way to express positivity. Stops at recipients' homes brighten up Tom and Jana's Saturday.

The welcoming spirit of the Saturday crew at FFA feels like a reunion with friends, and it also gives them a lift. When Jana saw the Saturday volunteers sharing store-purchased donuts, she put her baking skills to good use. Every week she brings delicious baked goodies for all the volunteers to enjoy together.

Recently she got a karmic response for her baking generosity. After her dad died and she had shattered an elbow, the volunteers brought her a bag filled with goodies. "That was so moving," Jana said. "I felt part of a large family."

CHRIS & JENNY – THE JOY OF NEW EXPERIENCES

Two years ago, when their boys had grown up, Chris and Jenny looked for other ways to use their time. A friend was already volunteering at FFA, so they willingly accepted his invitation to join the group.

They have been bagging groceries on Thursday mornings ever since. They enjoy the company of the volunteers and look forward to seeing these old and new friends each week. They feel they are getting more out of volunteering than they put in.

In addition, Chris delivers food on Saturdays, sometimes with their oldest son, who had this to say: "We have fun going around the city and meeting new people with different backgrounds. Some of them even remember my dad's name."

Chris and Jenny agree that volunteering at FFA has given them something completely different to get involved in. They love the new conversations that have been sparked by their shared experience. "Sharing something different with a partner is a key to a good long-term relationship," said Jenny



They also enjoy driving through the city to get to FFA. They both grew up in DC and point out places linked to their histories. "It has been great to piece together each other's biographies," Chris reflected

CATHY & HANK – BETTER TOGETHER

Cathy and Hank started volunteering with FFA in September 2020 as a way to help the community get through the Covid-19 pandemic. Cathy returns voicemails and messages one day per week and also schedules deliveries. On Fridays, Cathy and Hank deliver meals to FFA clients together.

"It was a time we could be together doing something we enjoyed, as we were both working full time during Covid," said Cathy. "Volunteering together gives us a chance to share the experiences together, and it also helps to have two when navigating the city." Over the years, Cathy and Hank have enjoyed meeting other FFA volunteers and clients, building relationships that keep them coming back. They say they've been impressed by the optimism and the dedication to going above and beyond that they see at Food For All.

"There is one client we visit, Helen, who is always filled with so much joy and sunshine," said Cathy. "We always leave with such joy, and we vow to each other to never complain about anything again."

Both Cathy and Hank agree they're happy they started volunteering together and recommend FFA to others who have time to give.



“Volunteering at FFA is easy, impactful and enjoyable,” Cathy said. “The ability to relieve a client’s stress of where their next meals are coming from by delivering healthy groceries to their door is amazing. This is especially true for families, because SNAP often does not cover the cost of groceries for growing children. I think if we can lessen someone else’s load, we should take the opportunity to do it.”

“Our society needs to get back to a sense of community, and each of us must take action toward that end — this is one of the ways we hope to be living up to that ideal,” Hank added.

We’re so grateful for the time all our volunteer partners give to FFA (and the time they gave for this interview!). Our volunteers make Food For All DC possible — we wouldn’t be here without each of you, whether you volunteer as a family or on your own.



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