

KAREN FINDS PURPOSE AND MEANING THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

My name is Karen. I own my own company, Blue Water Party Rentals, and wanted to give back on a personal level to improve our local community. I already hire Veterans from the VA Compensated Work Therapy Program, but I knew that there was more that I could do and wanted to give in a different way. I came across an interesting volunteer opportunity for Second Harvest and thought I would give that a try.

I felt like I was a part the Food Bank's extended family by working with their partner agencies to ensure that the California Health Code and other paperwork is followed. It came to me so easily due to my many years in restaurants and catering. Doing these inspections not only utilizes a skill set I already have, but also helps our community be safer and healthier. I know how important it is to train some of the staff at local shelters, soup kitchens and pantries on why it is important

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to provide meal programs in a safe environment. They are like sponges - they really soak up all the information and are grateful for the support. I also hand out the Food Connection hotline cards when I see families in need that do not know about the programs available to them. It makes me very happy when I can get people the help they need. For those of you who think you don't have the time to volunteer, I have to tell you it's the most rewarding thing you could do. You can set your own hours and improve people's lives instantly.



Everyone at Second Harvest is so nice, especially Mark Kokoletsos, my trainer and mentor! I love to see just how much the agencies and their clients are treated with dignity and respect. That's one thing that really stands out to me. It makes me realize how lucky I am: I have a roof over my head, food in my refrigerator, clothes on my back, and a great job. In just one moment, I know that I could lose everything and end up needing help from the food bank. It comforts me to know that they are there when the chips are down for any one of us. Volunteering is such a humbling experience, and I love every moment. It gives my life meaning. I hope that you'll give it a try and feel the impact it makes on you and on everyone around you.