

Volunteer Spotlight - April 2010

Rudy Garcia

Rudy Garcia began volunteering his time at the Del Paso Food Locker of Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS) in 2000. Nearly ten years later, Rudy is more involved than ever, helping SFBFS in a variety of ways. The inclination to help came naturally to Rudy. As a child, Rudy had helped his mom run the food assistance program at their Sacramento church and eventually took over the program at age 18.



As an adult, Rudy worked various jobs, including security and auto repossession, but eventually found his way back to volunteer work, which he says makes him the most happy. He is currently the primary caregiver for his father and spends the rest of his time serving in the Food Assistance program of SFBFS, at both the Oak Park facility and the mobile food distributions.

After helping close and clean up the Del Paso Food Locker in 2009, Rudy's involvement in other areas steadily increased. During the

holiday season, Rudy contributed long hours to provide assistance to the program. Gabriel Hall, Oak Park Food Assistance Program Manager, is grateful for Rudy's help. "I know I can call Rudy when other volunteers are sick and he will fill in for them. He has even run the program when I've been out. He does a lot for Food Assistance, even working from 9am to 9pm on Tuesdays, when he helps at Oak Park during the day and also helps out at the mobile distribution in the evening." Rudy goes above and beyond by facilitating a small SFBFS food distribution at a local apartment complex for low-income seniors every Wednesday. "One of the seniors is even teaching me a little Russian," says Rudy, who has also found his Spanish fluency extremely useful while working the check-in desk at SFBFS.

"Volunteering can be hard work," he admits. However, there are always moments that make it worthwhile. Rudy shares a story where he was able to find a birthday cake amongst the groceries to give to a man who had mentioned it was his birthday that day. The man was so touched that Rudy told him to wait a second, and found the man an even nicer cake. The client was so surprised at the gesture that he broke down in tears. The genuine appreciation and gratefulness that Rudy encounters keeps him coming back.

"Volunteering has kept me out of trouble," he adds. Those that have known Rudy a long time remember more of a tough guy who was known by his former nickname El Oso Maloso, or the big bad bear. Friends comment that Rudy's attitude has change completely since helping at SFBFS and he is now known as a mellow, happy guy. Rudy has even shared the experience with his extended family, including his nieces, who volunteer at special events. "I recommend volunteering to everyone," he says. "It is very rewarding for yourself and others."