

Volunteer Spotlight - February 2011

Evan Berry

Friday, November 19 started as a cool, somewhat cloudy morning for the third annual Turkey Drive at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS). The rain held off for the majority of the day, making it a great day for donors to swing by and drop off a turkey. Volunteers from local corporations, service groups and schools pitched in for a few hours of unloading and sorting turkeys. Although most volunteers contributed a four hour shift, a few volunteers enjoyed it so much they stayed alongside SFBFS staff for the entire day. Among these hardworking volunteers was Evan Berry, a regular volunteer in the Food Assistance program, often at the mobile food distributions. Evan arrived at the Turkey Drive at 10am to help for a few hours. Still volunteering at 5pm when the rain finally moved in, Evan was inspired by the energy of the volunteers and staff and impressed with the outpouring of support from donors. He knew he had to stay to see SFBFS reach the goal of 7,000 turkeys.



Evan first became involved as a volunteer for SFBFS five years ago while completing community service hours for his high school project. He started his service tenure by bagging and distributing food at the Del Paso Food Locker in north Sacramento. For him, volunteering at SFBFS was just plain fun. He enjoyed serving clients and always found that individuals were very pleasant and grateful for the help they received. He completed his volunteer hours but always remembered the positive volunteer experience. In mid-2010 while completing coursework at American River College, Evan began preparing for his transfer to UC Berkeley. He found a bit of extra time on his hands before moving to the Bay Area and thought it would be a good time to volunteer at SFBFS again. He attended SFBFS' volunteer orientation, immediately finding his niche helping out at mobile food distributions.

The mobile food distributions, part of SFBFS' Food Assistance program, are farmer's market style distributions that take place in church, school or community center parking lots throughout Sacramento. People living in these underserved neighborhoods are able to walk to the sites and receive an emergency supply of nutritious groceries from SFBFS, without having to find transportation to SFBFS' Oak Park facility. The distributions involve a lot of set-up and break down, moving tables and equipment, setting up tents and bagging groceries. Evan quickly became a regular volunteer at several mobile sites and an important asset to the Food Assistance team because he understood the set-up of each site and could lead new volunteers to prepare everything in a quick and accurate manner. "He's extremely reliable," says Marshall Graves, Food Assistance Director. "Evan never has to be told what to do – he senses where help is needed and does what needs to be done. He is never perturbed by the chaos of setting up an event, which is so nice to be around."

"It's easy," says Evan. "Sometimes I see that I just have to kind of jump in where I'm needed and do my best." Evan's philosophy on volunteering appears to have carried over to his personal life. He will depart in January for a two-week long internship in New Orleans, providing services to families in the Ninth Ward. Then, he will be off to UC Berkeley to finish off his undergrad degree. After that? "Not sure," Evan laughs. "I'll figure it out at Berkeley. I hope to continue volunteering and interning and learning through those experiences."

At about 6pm on November 19, the Turkey Drive was wrapping up, but the goal of 7,000 was still a few hundred turkeys away. The volunteer group that had been controlling traffic flow at the event left at 6pm, but cars continued to roll in. Evan saw the need for help, grabbed a reflective vest and a flag and stepped into the rain to assist. With Evan's leadership and the help of the other positive and energetic volunteers, the Turkey Drive had a smooth and successful conclusion at 7pm with 7,053 turkeys.