

Volunteer Spotlight - February 2010

Chris Suter

From October to December 2009, volunteers contributed over 13,800 hours of service at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS). One of the top contributors during the busy winter season was volunteer Chris Suter. "He worked basically as an un-paid staff member for two weeks," says Genevieve Deignan, Director of the Saca Community Learning Center (Saca CLC). She is referring to the last two weeks of December, when the Saca CLC collects donated gifts from the community and matches them to families in need through the annual Adopt-a-Family program.

Chris organized the distribution of gifts to over 200 families who participate in programs at SFBFS. Chris volunteered every day for the last two weeks in December, making sure gifts were accounted for and labeled, and devising a system to stay organized. "We could not have completed the Adopt-a-Family gift program successfully without him," adds Genevieve.



Chris (left) and his teammate at Race for the Rock

When asked how he came to be an SFBFS volunteer, Chris responds with a laugh. "The economy," he replies. When Chris lost his job as a fire protection engineer in 2009, he began helping out in the Adult Education program at the Saca CLC, but enjoyed assisting wherever help was needed. In addition to helping students learn English, tutoring in various subjects and even sorting donations for the Mother-Baby program, Chris began to lend his handyman skills around the building. At one point, he noticed some doors at the Saca Center were missing doorstops and took it upon himself to buy and install them on his own. "I enjoy the flexibility of helping out at all different things," he says.

More than a program volunteer, Chris also supports SFBFS special events and fundraisers. In June 2009, Chris participated in Race for the Rock, a fundraiser benefiting SFBFS where teams of two compete in a scavenger hunt in downtown Sacramento in search of a \$25,000 diamond ring. Chris and his teammate thought it would be a fun way to support SFBFS, but also enjoyed placing second in the race. When November came around, Chris volunteered for two other major SFBFS fundraisers, the Broker's Punt Pass & Kick event and the Run to Feed the Hungry. On November 20, SFBFS held its second annual Turkey Drive, collecting nearly 7,000 frozen turkeys, which were distributed the following week. Chris volunteered for both days of turkey distribution. Once again, Chris worked alongside staff members after most other volunteers headed home, clocking twelve hour days of service each day. He smiles as he recalls building "turkey mountain" in the large walk-in freezer in the Oak Park warehouse to assist with the sorting of turkeys into bins based on

weight. "He is a great example of someone that is doing something beneficial with his time while he looks for work," says Genevieve. "He has fun and is helping the community at the same time."

Chris, a Sacramento native and UC Berkeley graduate, is modest about his contribution. "I have the time, and I enjoy using it this way," says Chris. "I see the effect that the SFBFS staff has on the people they are helping, and it feels good to contribute to that. I've put my volunteer work on my resume, but a one line description just doesn't do justice to everything that goes on at Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services."