

Volunteer Spotlight - March 2011

Chef Russ Landers

Russ Landers has always been committed to volunteer service. "It fills me up," he says. Three years ago, at the same time that he was starting Your At Home Chef, his own small catering and personal chef business, Chef Russ called Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services looking for a volunteer opportunity. After learning about the various programs offered, he called and asked if his culinary experience could be put to use in any capacity. After brainstorming with the SFBFS staff, Chef Russ started helping out at SFBFS'



North Sacramento facility, the Saca Community Learning Center (Saca CLC), by cooking lunch for 10-20 volunteers and staff every Thursday afternoon. "It was the most fun day of cooking out of the week," says Chef Russ. Every Thursday morning, he would stop by the main facility in Oak Park to pick up food spices, and cooking supplies. Ingredients depended on what the warehouse had in stock. Using his culinary creativity, Chef Russ would use the unpredictable combinations of food to prepare a healthy and delicious lunch as a thank you for the volunteers' service. He continued to volunteer once a week for just over two years and becoming involved with many other events as well.

Over the past year, as Your At Home Chef expanded its clientele and business continued to grow, Chef Russ cut back on his weekly volunteering. However, whenever SFBFS has a special event, Chef Russ can be found in the kitchen, oftentimes with his daughter Stella by his side. He shares his volunteer spirit with his family whenever he has the chance. The generous

entrepreneur has donated food, time, and expertise to approximately 10 SFBFS events over the past year, including events for low-income families such as the children's Halloween carnival and the Thanksgiving celebration. He even cooked for the Saca CLC's 5th Anniversary party last year, where guests, friends, and acquaintances of SFBFS enjoyed a variety of appetizers including sundried tomato bruschetta, smoked salmon, and baked brie with apples and caramelized onions. Chef Russ brings gourmet flair to every event.

One of the largest events for which Chef Russ volunteered his time was the annual Christmas celebration for the families that receive services through the Saca CLC's programs. Chef Russ coordinated staff and volunteers to prepare over 600 bowls of chili, bread and desserts for everyone in attendance. He even convinced his own family to volunteer, who were visiting from out of town. The cooking took place at both the Saca CLC and the Robertson Community Center in North Sacramento. Transporting the huge pots of chili without mess was a task completed safely by the experienced Chef Russ. "Logistically, that was a crazy event," recalls Chef Russ. "It was such a great experience." Because of Chef Russ's efforts, SFBFS was able to serve hundreds of families at just \$1.14 per meal.

Although Chef Russ is busier than ever with his business, somehow, between catering weddings, dinner parties, bar mitzvahs and even preparing in-home meals for new moms, seniors and individuals with special diets, Chef Russ always finds time to offer to Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services. SFBFS is grateful to work with a community volunteer who is happy to share his professional skills and his passion to benefit the community.