

OLLI Volunteers: Find Joy and Make a Difference; Part 1: The Volunteers (continued)

A move to Asheville in 1999 connected her with MANNA Food Bank, where she served as Director of Development and then Executive Director. Coordinating public policy efforts at all six NC food banks and developing a well-received fresh produce program at MANNA are counted among her major successes at MANNA.

Lesson: Sometimes volunteerism follows a lifelong pattern of established values.

While Kitty's path followed a common theme of non-profits focused on nutrition, food, and hunger, Lee's concentration was on his professional practice with little time for volunteering, until he and his wife Linda relocated to Asheville from Pennsylvania and joined OLLI in 2010. As Lee says, "I wanted to give something back so I reached out to different things." From Rathbun Center to Big Brother/Big Sister to inspecting nursing homes for Buncombe County, to OLLI committees, he persevered to find a volunteer endeavor that was a fit for him.

Lesson: Like Goldilocks looking for the right fit, volunteerism requires patience and a willingness to explore.

Lee describes a fit he's discovered as a volunteer at Verner Center for Early Learning. "I first volunteered through OLLI to participate in preparing test recipes for the Rainbow in my Tummy program. Since I love to cook and value nutrition, this seemed like a good fit for me. Kelly Brandon, Director of Resource Development at Verner Center, informed me that there was a much greater need for classroom volunteers. Though I had never considered interacting with preschool children, I consented to give it a try. It's well on over 2 years now and I'm still there every week getting down on the floor in the classroom or running with the kids on the playground. They are so thankful. I clean, help teachers, put cots out...do scuttle work." **Lesson: Volunteerism can be a satisfying "hands-on" experience in an area you never suspected.**

Kitty also volunteers at Verner Center, but in a very different way. "Like Lee, I was looking forward to seeing kids smile. However, my long career in non-profits led me to serve Verner's Board as Chair of the Development Committee...that's fundraising."

True to her lifelong commitment to making a difference, Kitty not only volunteers at Verner Center. "At Manna FoodBank, I started a public policy committee and, in retirement, I keep my hand in with advocacy, trying to ensure lawmakers are fair to those facing hunger. At Pisgah Legal Services, I co-chair the Domestic Violence committee, where once again I do fundraising. But, when the Affordable Care Act (ACA) came along, I realized I could link my passion to fight hunger with health. As an ACA Navigator, I help people who may face poverty and health challenges. It's a cause very close to my heart. I was amazed at how much time it took me to learn ACA facts so I could help people buy insurance – sometimes for the first time." **Lesson: Volunteerism can benefit from skills and experience you developed over a lifetime.**

Asheville and OLLI are lucky to have these two outstanding volunteers, who put their talents, hearts, and time to making a difference...right here, right now.

Check out volunteer opportunities with the organizations mentioned in this article...

- Pisgah Legal: Beth Hermann (beth@pisgahlegal.org) or <http://www.pisgahlegal.org>
- Verner: Katy Allen (KAllen@verneremail.org) or <http://www.vernerearlylearning.org> (Note: Verner is actively looking for more volunteers.)
- MANNA Food Bank: Max Gruber (mgruber@mannafoodbank.org) or <http://www.mannafoodbank.org>