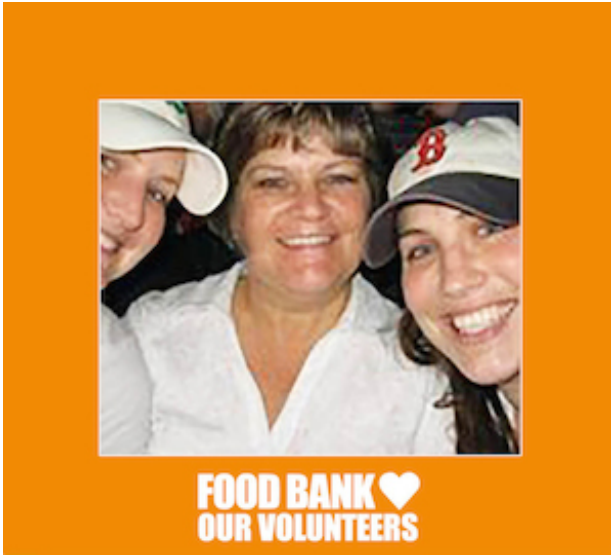


A Volunteering Sabbatical in NYC

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by **Kathy Berry**

After my daughters were grown and I had time on my hands, I discovered the joy of volunteerism. I had always helped out at my girls' schools, but when I fulfilled a major dream and moved to New York City in October 2013 I decided to take a sabbatical so I could do even more. On the recommendation of a friend, I interviewed for a volunteer opportunity with Food Bank For New York City and was lucky enough to be placed in an Event Lead position at the New York City Wine & Food Festival (NYCWFF). My first assignment was managing a team of volunteers inside the festival; then I was moved outside to help with registration.

I loved the young people I worked with. The support volunteers were wonderful, and when one of them called me Mama Kathy, my heart sang. The guests were friendly, fun, and excited to be there. Sylvester Stallone came right by me. So did Joe Namath. Each night when I was done with my volunteer duties, I popped into the evenings' events: Burger Bash hosted by Rachel Ray. Tequila and Tacos with Bobby Flay. So much fun, and oh, the food!

My only regret is that I didn't get to chat much with my fellow Event Leads as I was outside and they were inside. But we caught up, giggled, and relived all the fun moments when we did see each other. I have their emails. Hopefully we can connect and have a reunion. More new friends!

I loved everything I did that weekend, and it wouldn't be my last time volunteering with Food Bank. Just a few weeks later I was at their downtown Manhattan office doing volunteer outreach. While I was making my phone calls, Food Bank President and CEO Margarett Purvis gathered the staff for an exciting announcement. NY1 News had just selected the Food Bank For New York City as the "New Yorkers of the Year"! I was moved, humbled, and proud to be helping in any small way that I could for such a wonderful organization. It has become one of my favorite places to volunteer.

Kathy Berry is a healthcare professional who is currently taking a sabbatical to volunteer throughout New York City.