Why I Volunteer

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By Victoria Dennis

I've been lucky to volunteer in Food Bank's Benefits Access department, where I get to serve hundreds of low-income New Yorkers each month. Here at the call center we help clients gain and maintain access to SNAP (food stamp) benefits, refer clients to food pantries and soup kitchens, and provide community outreach services. We also offer information and referral services to clients facing a broad range of problems. Since this fall, we have provided special support to neighbors affected by super storm Sandy.

Like many others in Food Bank's community, I volunteer because hunger and food insecurity are pressing problems for far too many of our neighbors. Many of our clients are facing chronic, acute or life-threatening illnesses, and often crippling health care costs. Others are working parents whose low-wage jobs can't adequately cover the cost of food for their families. Every day, the Food Bank helps reduce hunger and food shortages for New Yorkers in need.

My relationship with Food Bank began as a donor--and I'm still one today. But two and a half years ago, as the devastating effects of the recession deepened, I decided to try my hand at volunteering here.

The rewards of volunteering at Food Bank are immeasurable. I am especially gratified when I can help older low-income New Yorkers, a growing number of whom now find the costs of living and food a huge challenge. It's an honor for me to work with our highly skilled Benefits Access staff. They are patient, respectful and compassionate while serving anxious, food insecure families who face a daunting bureaucracy. Another highlight of my work has been my contact with the unsung heroes: the wonderful volunteers in our network of food pantries and soup kitchens who give countless hours of service.

In the current fiscal climate, our most vulnerable neighbors face daunting challenges, and hunger is a very real problem for them. But a group of concerned citizens can make a difference. And that's why I volunteer at Food Bank. If you'd like to volunteer too, please click here.

Victoria Dennis, LMSW, is a Benefits Access Call Center volunteer at Food Bank For New York City.