

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2009

It seems to us that all our volunteers show up happy when they come to work at the Food Bank. And by all accounts, they stay that way. On the job, they demonstrate a positive, thumbs-up attitude, as well as a tendency to push hard and fast to accomplish as much as they possibly can before their shift ends. And when they do finish, they leave behind an uplifted mood that can be felt throughout the Food Bank. We think it comes from having done good work for a good cause. It's a bond that we share with our volunteers and a reason to celebrate our relationship with them. It's a real joy to have them in our "house."

For all the ways our volunteers are alike, there is no one-size-fits-all description for them. They volunteer as members of major business corporations, private companies, professional and civic organizations, the U.S. military, churches, schools, universities, fraternal organizations, the U.S. Postal Service, the Boy Scouts of America, neighborhoods and families, retirees and service businesses—and others too numerous to include here.

And individuals sometimes do walk in from the street to sign up as Food Bank volunteers. One, a retired executive, has agreed to work all day every Monday of the year. Another, an airline captain, volunteered time left over from his 15 hours a week in the cockpit. And then there are the two Kazakstani's who gave us a few hours away from their ongoing tour of America.

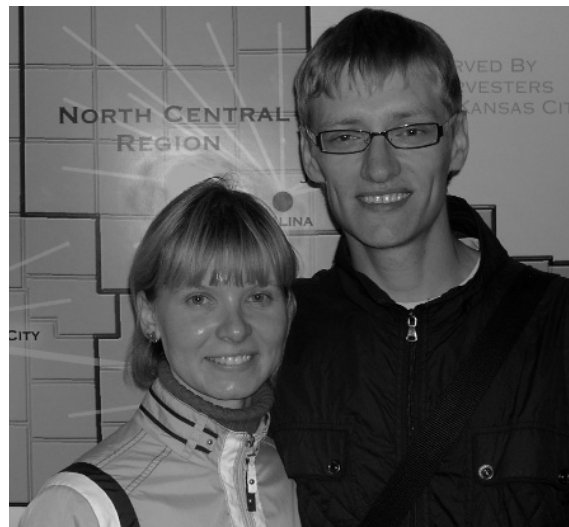
The services of our documented volunteers amounted to at least 18,000 hours, the equivalent of about nine full-time workers. Some 10,000 of those hours went into assembling nearly a million-and-a half single items into 120,000 packets for our Food 4 Kids program. And there were lots more hours left for other programs. We clearly can't do without these "labors of love" from our volunteers.

Send us some, if you can.

—Brian Walker, President/CEO

"WE'RE NOT IN KAZAKSTAN ANYMORE!" That may well be the thought that keeps crossing the minds of Anastassiyo and Yergen (John) Mashkovskiy, two young married Kazakstanis as they continue their six-month tour of America.

While many of the sights and sounds of our country may seem strange to Ana and John, they quickly learned to like the concept of Food Banks, so much so, in fact, that while in Wichita they sought us out and came to the Food Bank and volunteered to work at assembling food packets for our Food 4 Kids Backpack program. Although time with us was brief, it was a warm and engaging experience, which shortened the vast distance between our country and theirs.



Anastassiyo and Yergen Mashkovskiy.


This was particularly true when they were greeted by Polly Basore. "Ochen Privatna," she said, which in Russian means "Nice to meet you." And we all agreed. It was very nice, indeed.

SCOOP AFTER SCOOP...that's the way 14 giant boxes of cereal (40"x48"x48") were recently unloaded and then reloaded into more manageable sizes of Ziploc bags by 20 student volunteers from District #160 schools! As members of the campus dramatic arts club called the Thespians, they began their performance at the Food Bank at 8:30 am. until it ended at 2 pm. During that time, they scooped cereal from big boxes into smaller bags, labeled the bags and stored them, six to a box. As Thespians they played their parts well, with gusto and a clear appreciation of the importance of what they were doing.

At "curtain-down" time, they removed their plastic caps and gloves, put away the plastic scoops and quietly went their way, leaving behind the results of their 100 hours of volunteer labor—a fine gift from a fine crew of Thespians. We give a very big Food Bank thank you to them and teacher and drama coach Richard Shultz.

PLANT-A-ROW LEAPS INTO FALL! It's not over 'til it's over, but this year's Plant-A-Row campaign is now in its last real harvest of the year. According to Kevin Enz, the Food Bank's Plant-A-Row representative, the moving total of garden fresh produce has now gone beyond its last year-to-date report of 46,462 pounds.

Even though this latest count is slightly under the same period last year, Kevin expects to have an ending total matching, or slightly exceeding, last year's final accounting. Congratulations to Kevin and the other leaders of Plant-A-Row for continuing their efforts to add fresh fruit and vegetables to our food selections for hungry Kansans.

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