

Subject: Thanksgiving message #2

I'm sending a second message for Thanksgiving. Why?

As you know, I spend most of the winter in Florida and work from there. Last winter I decided to start working at a food pantry 2-3 mornings per week. It has been an eye opening experience.

This organization distributes a wide range of food and needed items to anyone who comes. Volunteers set up several card tables, unload pallets of food donated from grocery stores, bakeries, and an array of other entities. Everything from tomatoes to bread, flour, potatoes, fruit, tuna, frozen meat of all types, pasta, assorted can goods, desserts, etc., etc. People of all ages and nationalities walk through the line with carts, and collect what they want. The vast majority are so very grateful. The need is huge, and in fact, this pantry distributes 23% of all the food distributed by pantries in the county.

However, the distribution of food is not the only goal. The real mission is to treat each and every person with dignity, respect, and kindness, and there's another thing that's interesting. ALL of the volunteers just show up. There's no calendar. No schedule. Volunteers know they're needed and just show up. On any given day they could number from 25-50 people.

What I've discovered are that many of the volunteers are in just as much need as those who come for food. They come, they work very hard, and they take care of those they serve. They give much, much more than they take. In short, they are amazingly wonderful people.

Last winter I interacted with one of the pantry leaders, Scott Noble. Scott knew everyone. He got his start at the pantry by coming there shortly after Hurricane Ian because HE was in need. He discovered they needed help and immediately volunteered. He soon became a fixture and even though he

struggled to walk for reasons I don't know, he became a leader. I watched him and soon cherished him as a person and as a mentor.

When I got here in mid -October, I resumed my participation, and I began to notice I hadn't seen Scott. I asked about him and was totally sad to discover he had passed away in his sleep last August at the age of 58. My heart both ached and yet rejoiced at having known him. He was an unknown, non-affluent, remarkable individual who lived a life of service to others. What an example. What a reason to give thanks for Scott, for the pantry, and for the opportunity to work along side many wonderful volunteers. They are all truly an inspiration.

I close with a note of appreciation to you for continuing to allow me to work with and for you. It is a privilege, and I am always grateful for the relationship we have. I hope your Thanksgiving is filled with peace and joy and that you make special memories with your family.

All the very best,

Bob

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