

# The Good Samaritan

## A mother and son volunteer together at the Food Pantry

Over the summer, a mother and son served side-by-side at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's Food Pantry on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Yolanda Shields and her son, Ben Blackford, a senior at St. Xavier High School, have been able to share a special bond with each other by volunteering together.

"I just like being with my mom," Ben said.

"We're a closeknit family—me, him, and his dad," Yolanda added.

Ben has worked at the produce window, handing out fresh vegetables and fruit to folks, triple bagged the grocery bags to make them more durable, and filled bags with food items. He even helped a Spanish-speaking client.

"Whenever we help people, it feels good," Ben said. "I think working with clients at the produce window and seeing how grateful they are, it really helped me to have a lot more empathy for those in need."

A couple of summers ago, Ben and his mom started serving at the Food Pantry and Open Hand Kitchen so he could get his school service hours. The reason to give back has become much deeper.

"We ended up liking it so much, and it was so easy for us to come here, we kind of got hooked on it," Yolanda said.

This comradery between clients and volunteers has created a place of connection and mutuality

at the Food Pantry and Open Hand Kitchen.

"There are a lot of stigmas that people have to fight coming to places like this," Yolanda added. "The staff is so welcoming to people that routinely come here, everybody knows everybody ... they're so familiar with everybody it makes them feel less of that stigma."

Yolanda knows this firsthand. When she was a student at Sacred Heart Academy, her dad lost his job and they had to go to a food pantry in Portland.

"I understand that life can be unpredictable," she said. "That situation helped me to understand sometimes it's a culmination of bad things that causes someone to

become homeless. When you're going through that, you feel vulnerable and humiliated. You need people to be kind to you and not judge you, especially when you're coming to get some food."

Yolanda has seen service with compassion and dignity lived out on our Shelby Park campus.

"I just feel like people who are down on their luck need somebody to be nice to them," Yolanda said. "I saw that at St. Vincent de Paul. People who work or volunteer here are so kind to the people that come here. They all know each other. They all ask about each other's lives. It was just really genuine."

As Ben prepares for life after high school, his mom is grateful for what volunteering at SVDP has taught him. It's something you can't get in a classroom.

"It teaches him about people, circumstances, giving, and being kind," Yolanda said. "We're grateful to be a part of it ... It's just very warm here."

Ben is a Xavier scholar and a member of the National Honor Society. His ACT score was 35 (the highest possible score is 36). He wants to study atmospheric sciences or meteorology and is applying to Stanford University, Harvard University, and other Ivy League schools. He aspires to be a researcher or background forecaster for the National Weather Service.

"There's never really a dull day with the weather because it's always different," Ben said.



# THAN



# 21st Annual Clubs & Cocktails is pin high

Our 21st annual ISCO Industries Clubs & Cocktails was full of powerful moments at The Olmsted!

Bill Smith won the Hope Award and reminded us that it's never too late to experience victory in your life. We heard from our CEO & Executive Director Jennifer Clark and SVDP USA National President John Berry, and gave much deserved recognition to Dave Calzi for his continual support of our mission!

Thank you to the nearly 200 guests, 25 foursomes at the golf scramble, and all of our sponsors who made this event possible and for your generosity to those in need! You raised a total of \$177,000 over the course of this two-day event!

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