Ray, Guest and Volunteer

Ray was laid off. Once his unemployment ran out, he struggled to keep his head above water while dealing with homelessness. In order to stay busy, Ray volunteered with The Gathering’s Breakfast program for almost a year. “I like it. I really do. I used to come here back in the 80’s before I started working again. From the first time I started coming over here until now, don’t matter who they have running it or who they have working it – they always have the same mentality that they had back then...to treat people with dignity. When you treat people with respect, they tend to not think that they know better than anybody else. We’re all the same. Everybody goes through certain things. That’s the way it was back then and it still holds true now.” Today, Ray has a full time long haul truck driving job.

St. Monica’s Catholic Middle School Volunteer Group

Q. What is one thing you learned from your experience serving at The Gathering?

B: “I learned that happiness does not come from objects, or all the things we have, it comes from other people. We were serving those people and that brought happiness inside of all of us.”

M: “I learned that even though people don’t have as much as us, they’re still like us. They want to be treated the same, they don’t want to be treated differently and they treat you the same way as they treat their friends. We’re all equals.”

C: “I learned that they’re real people, just like you and I. When you think of a ‘homeless person,’ you sometimes think of someone so foreign from us, but they’re relatable and just humans like us.”

Jeanette, Community Volunteer

Jeanette does not volunteer just to give back, she also gains from her experience.”Sometimes you can really feel alone. But when I go to The Gathering, I feel like a part of something. It’s not about status or socioeconomic means, it’s just about everyone being there. No one’s background really matters. It’s bigger than me; it’s about making the community go in a positive direction.”

Johnson Controls Volunteer Groups

For twenty plus years, volunteers from Johnson Controls have put on a Christmas in July event for The Gathering’s South Side guests. Employees decorate the dining hall, cook and serve the meal, distribute treat bags. Christmas in July is just one example of how a dedicated partnership can inspire creative opportunities. Through monthly dinner volunteering, board service, fund raisers, Christmas in July, and more, Johnson Controls and its employees truly are committed to feeding the hungry. Christmas in July organizer, Becky Lange, put it this way, “Personally, I think that we as a company can’t be successful if our communities aren’t successful. We as employees live in these communities and we should have a personal stake in seeing them flourish, which is what Johnson Controls promotes through our Community Involvement Program.”

Curtis, Guest and Volunteer

Each morning at The Gathering’s breakfast, before the doors open to meal guests and the room is filled with laughter and conversation, a volunteer is often asked to give an opening thought or prayer. If you are lucky, Curtis will raise his hand, stand up, and with a voice fueled by faith, sing “The Lord has Made a Place for Me.” The song blesses the meal, the volunteers and each guest who will come through the line. “When I sing that song,” Curtis says, gesturing to the kitchen and dining area of The Gathering. “This is what I’m talking about. Right here.”