

Volunteers keep local food bank running smoothly

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Fairfield resident and volunteer Kenny Harris, 20, helps Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano driver Hubert Williams unload a box of cauliflower at the Vacaville Boys & Girls Club on Wednesday. (Greg Trott/GTrott@TheReporter.com)

In the end, it's all about helping people.

So said Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano volunteers Wednesday, as they hefted fruits and veggies and directed foot traffic during a Community Produce Program event at the Vacaville Neighborhood Boys & Girls Club.

The program, which started last July in Contra Costa County and subsequently extended to Solano County, offers free produce to needy families by way of a refrigerated truck that makes regular stops in local cities.

On Wednesday, dozens of participants happily took home bags of potatoes, carrots, onions, pears, carrots, cauliflower and celery. With shy smiles and effervescent thank yous, they quickly left with their goods.

"It's really neat to have fresh fruit and vegetables.



Fairfield resident Mildred Watkins helps distribute fruit and vegetables to those in need at the Vacaville Boys & Girls Club. Watkins volunteers for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. (Greg Trott/GTrott@TheReporter.com)

It just expands your meals," said Casey Takashima, a Fairfield volunteer.

Having recently lost her full-time job, she admitted to needing the service. Her gratitude later led her to volunteer.

"Everyone's super nice and helpful," Takashima enthused. "When I see kids ... get excited about the fresh fruit, it's great."

For Mildred Watkins of Fairfield, a Live United TV commercial inspired her to lend a hand.

"I'm influenced by the media," she joked.

The retired law enforcement employee said she likes keeping busy and wanted to give back, and the food bank program fit the bill. Plus, the requirement is just an hour and the service, she said, is important.

"They're landlocked in terms of a grocery store," she said of local clientele. "The nearest store is so far away ... and expensive."

Kenny Harris of Fairfield enjoys spreading a feeling of community through volunteering.

"I just really wanted to help," he said. "I just like the interaction, seeing everybody, helping them out."

More volunteers are being sought for distribution sites in Dixon, Fairfield, Vacaville and Vallejo, where they will assist with registration and hand out bags of produce. Warehouse volunteers are needed to bag the goods. Opportunities are available Monday through Saturday. The organization is open until 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Lauren Strouse at lstrouse@foodbankccs.org or 421-9777, ext. 235.

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