Helping Kids in a New Way

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by Angela Ebron

All of my volunteer experiences over the years have involved children--by choice. I've worked with various social service groups to tutor elementary school kids from low-income families who were considered "at risk." (Although I prefer my colleague Beau's more accurate way of putting it: "at promise.") I've also performed front desk triage at an organization in New York City that has been helping teens in need become successful adults for more than 40 years. Now, as part of Food Bank For New York City, I get to continue serving children, but in a whole new way.

I recently volunteered at our Community Kitchen and Food Pantry in Harlem with the rest of Food Bank's Marketing and Communications team. We spent the day stocking pantry shelves and preparing dinner. As I placed fresh vegetables into bins, put frozen meats into the freezer, folded utensils into napkins, and dished piping hot chicken into food containers for that day's dinner service, I thought about all the families who would come through the doors later that afternoon to get a hot meal or bags full of groceries to take home.

In the past, I worked with kids one-on-one. That's what I've always loved most about volunteering -- having an immediate connection. There's just something so gratifying about building a bond with a child who is relying on you. But helping out at our Community Kitchen and Food Pantry made me realize that I can still have a huge impact on children's lives, even if they're not right there with me. One in 5 children in New York City relies on a soup kitchen or food pantry to eat. So the hours I spent helping stock shelves and prepare meals made a real difference in a child's life that day. And knowing that is every bit as gratifying. If you'd like to volunteer too, click here.

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