

Pillars Volunteer Spotlight

Deb Hetland

Resource Center Captain



Deb Hetland, I am not sure where to begin with Deb. As of yesterday (4/29), Deb has been a volunteer with Pillars for one full year. Deb came to me with a lot of experience in non-profits, more specifically in the area of volunteer management/coordination. Deb volunteers at Pillars Resource Center where she started out as a Front Desk Assistant and has since created the role of Resource Center Captain. As the Resource Center Captain, Deb work closely with staff to update volunteers on any new processes, changes, or current happenings at the Resource Center. She has also taken on most communications between the Resource Center & volunteers; Deb trains new volunteers, assists at the front desk, creates schedules, and communicates weekly updates to all Resource Center Front Desk Assistants.

It is my pleasure to introduce Deb Hetland!

Q: Can you tell me a little about yourself?

"I grew up on a farm in SW Minnesota. Both of my parents worked very hard and they made sure their children did too. I was the first in my family to attend/graduate from college. I was a sprinter in high school and college as well. I've lived in Minneapolis and Iowa and have been in Appleton for over 20 years. My husband and I have been married for 35 years. We have a married daughter who lives in Chicago and works as a manager in Marketing for United Airlines (parents receive flight benefits too). Our son is working on his PhD at Northwestern University in Evanston studying Computer Engineering."



Q: What were you doing before you became a volunteer at Pillars?

"I was a banker when I lived in Minneapolis. I worked as a lender and then managed a Branch Office in Bloomington. I retired from my career to stay home with my children full time. When I became an empty nester, I volunteered and worked positions in nonprofit."

Q: Why did you start volunteering at Pillars? What motivates you to continue volunteering?

"I volunteer because I have a lot and it's a little way I can give back to my community. Also, I like to keep busy. It's a way to use my talent. It helps to keep my skills sharper as well."

Q: What does your typical volunteer shift look like?

"I work at the Pillars Resource Center front desk for 4 to 6 hours during the week. I usually volunteer two shifts each week. I enjoy getting to know the clients, developing their trust and hearing stories about their struggles. I miss clients when I don't see them and usually try to follow up to discern if they are safe."

It's a great time of celebration when the client finds a place to call home, and a real joy when clients find a job. I also reach out through social media, my church, newspaper, and ask my friends if they would like to volunteer at the Resource Center. As the Resource Center Captain, I train new front desk volunteers as needed, and communicate the general duties that are available at the Resource Center. Most of the latter volunteer service I do from my home computer; My son gave me a large screen to work from and my husband says I look like a day trader when I'm in my home office."

Q: How has volunteering impacted you?

"Whenever I have a "bad" day, volunteering reminds me how I can be grateful. It also gets my mind off whatever worry I may have at the time because I'm too busy seeing how I can meet the needs of the client. Volunteering really is an investment in your community. It's something you give that makes it a better place, not just for today but for future generations, for me and for the client."

Q: What is the best thing that has happened to you, or that you have seen while volunteering?

"The best thing, and it has happened many times, is when a client is in distress and another client reaches out to meet their need. It's awe inspiring to see how folks with very little can give so much of themselves. I am humbled that I have so much and give relatively little of it. I'm compelled to give more of myself and my resources. This is not about me, it's about them."

Q: Is there one thing the world should know about you?

"Hmmm.....I hate to cook and bake but I won the Post Crescent Christmas Cookie contest a few years ago and the chili cook off at the Resource Center this year. This mystifies my family and friends."

Q: For individuals interested in serving in your position at Pillars, what is one thing they should know?

"I think that sometimes people are a little intimidated about hanging out with Pillars clients. You will learn that there is not much of a difference between "us" and "them"; We are in this together and we will look, struggle, find ways to bring down the barriers so that life is a bit kinder for them and their families."

THANK YOU, DEB!



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