

Pillars Volunteer Spotlight

Melanie Mailand

Meal Server & Laundry Assistant



Q: Can you tell me a little about yourself?

"I'm a wife, mom, and full-time physical therapist. I love to crochet, read, walk, and be outside. Oh, and eating chocolate is a favorite thing to do as well! I started doing puzzles since I have spent more time at home during the pandemic too."

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

"Giving back to others is a family value so I have always been busy. Before Pillars, I was a Cub Scout Leader, Girl Scout Leader, and religion education helper. I've been on church committees, lead donation drives at work, and I also volunteer at the Community Clothes Closet on Monday mornings."

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

"Why? I am trying to live my assignment! My volunteering at Pillars was intermittent for many years but when the pandemic hit, and Pillars asked for help in the newspaper and it seemed it was time to step up! I had evening availability and Pillars had the opportunity. Why I continue? Volunteering brings me joy. I am happy serving others. Life is an adventure, and I don't want to miss too much."



Q: What does your typical volunteer shift look like?

"Typically, I arrive 15 minutes early for my shift and check in with staff, so I know what to expect. Dinner may be there, on its way, or need to be prepared! That is always fun. Then the serving areas need to be sanitized and set-up so the food can be kept warm. I then throw some laundry in and give a wall or two a scrub. Meal serving starts at six and while serving I enjoy a bit of small talk with the guests. I then assist with cleaning up afterwards by doing dishes, cleaning the kitchen, and putting away leftovers. If needed, I sometimes orient new servers in the kitchen too."

Q: How has volunteering impacted you?

"I want to make a difference in the world. I believe volunteering empowers me to do just that. And when I come home, I am happier... tired, but happier. I try to make a difference; volunteering opens my eyes and heart. Volunteering allows me to use my talents."

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

“The best thing I’ve seen while volunteering is the community’s response – meals, paper towels, clothing, hotel space during the summer – Lots of people stepped up! And I got to help!”

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

“Can I name 2? I joined Aerial Dance shortly before everything shut down. But I am proud to say I learned how to stand on 1 foot in a hammock suspended from the ceiling without my hands! I have also been camping at Rock Island State Park for 35 years, in a tent with my family. Primitive & awesome!”

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

“Face masks work. I have served many, many meals at Pillars. I wear a face mask and the guests and staff wear them. The virus has made its way into shelter, people have been quarantined, but I have always tested negative. We need to continue to care for all of our neighbors!”

THANK YOU, MELANIE!



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