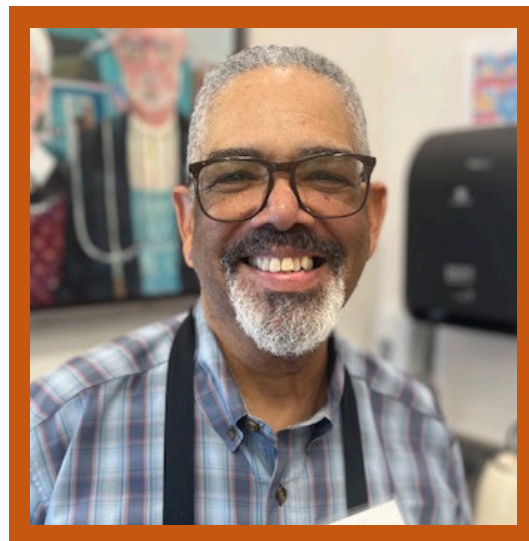


Harvest Cafe Volunteering – A Meaningful Contribution

Jack Mitchell’s journey from a long and distinguished career in hospitality to a fulfilling retirement, enriched by volunteering at the Sebastopol Area Senior Center (SASC), is a testament to the power of community and the human need for purpose. His story begins with a chance encounter. A neighbor, Ariel, recognizing his recent retirement and hospitality background, suggested he volunteer at SASC's Harvest Café. Intrigued after a prior butterfly farm day trip organized by the center, Jack accepted.



Jack's 30-year career was a whirlwind of experiences. Beginning in San Francisco at the Ritz-Carlton, he humbly recounts serving a diverse clientele. “I once had the entire cast of "Waiting to Exhale," Nelson Mandela and Marlon Brando.” Emphasizing the shared humanity he discovered in each interaction, Jack shares, "I learned we're all cut from the same cloth.” This profound understanding of human connection shaped his approach to service, anticipating needs and exceeding expectations, a skill he honed over decades.

Jack decided to relocate to Seattle, where he continued his career in hospitality. Jack's inherent attentiveness, a defining characteristic throughout his 25 years at the Marriot Hotel in Seattle, was unexpectedly tested during the COVID-19 pandemic. The absence of banquets, meetings, and regular customers made him adrift. Choosing to return to the Bay Area, Jack moved in with his best friend of 40 years. “We are both seniors. We can look after each other. It’s a wonderful way to age together - here with a best friend.”



Volunteering at the Harvest Café rekindled Jack's innate ability to anticipate and fulfill the needs of others, leading to a revitalized sense of purpose. His role at the café proves to be immensely rewarding, not only for the patrons he serves but also for his well-being. “It feels wonderful to be doing this again,” Jack reveals. The renewed engagement spurred him to take on additional responsibilities, including assisting seniors with doctor appointments at another local organization. “My grand-niece is getting married in Spain in October, and I needed to find a way to join in this destination wedding. Re-entering the work world is a result of volunteering, I am awakened to this feeling of wanting to help others again, and it is wonderful,” he shares.



Volunteering and retirement have brought a welcome shift in perspective to Jack. "I'm all about being a senior and helping seniors," he states with a smile. His newfound freedom allows him to readily offer extra shifts at the café when needed, a testament to his dedication.

Jack expresses sincere gratitude for the unexpected opportunities life presents. A day trip to a local butterfly farm offered through the SASC day trip program was on his radar because of his sister-in-law's love of butterflies. This unexpectedly led him to the SASC, and ultimately, when his neighbor suggested volunteering at the center, a vibrant new chapter in his life was revealed.

Jack volunteers one to two days a week at the Harvest Cafe and recognizes familiar faces at the library. The simple act of being noticed brings him immense joy, highlighting the powerful impact of community belonging. "People come up to me around town and say, 'I missed you. Where have you been?' It's a wonderful feeling to be noticed."

Jack's story is not only one of personal fulfillment but also a beautiful example of how retirement can be a time for growth, connection, and meaningfully contributing to the lives of others. Jack himself is a heartwarming reminder of the richness that volunteering brings to both the giver and the receiver. We welcome Jack to the Sebastopol Area Senior Center and The Harvest Café community. **Thank you Jack, for your volunteering heart!**



To learn more about
volunteer opportunities

Please visit us at
www.sebastopolseniorcenter.org



The Harvest Cafe
Monday - Friday
11:30 am - 1:30 pm

167 N. High St in Sebastopol
(707) 829-2440