

A Volunteer's Dedication to his Family and Community

Growing up in Pittsburg, California, as the youngest of seven children, Mitch Lemay witnessed firsthand his parents' unwavering dedication. His mother, an environmental services worker at John Muir Hospital, and his father juggling a dry-cleaning business by day and janitorial work by night, instilled in Mitch a deep sense of family and community. "My dad never missed one of my baseball games, ever, not ONE!" he says with amazement and pride.

After graduating from Saint Mary's College in Moraga in 1985, Mitch embarked on a 31-year career in law enforcement, rising through the ranks from Deputy to Sergeant and then to Police Chief. Retirement in 2016, however, didn't mean slowing down. Instead of pursuing the typical retirement pastimes—travel and golf—Mitch found inspiration in his mother's volunteer work. He recalled her dedication to volunteering in his daughter's school cafeteria.

As his parents aged, Mitch and his wife, Cathy, recognized the need for additional support. The Council on Aging Meals on Wheels' support for his parents solidified their commitment to giving back. A lighthearted agreement between Mitch and Cathy—that whoever retired first would volunteer with Meals on Wheels—set the stage for Mitch's next endeavor.

True to his words, Mitch joined Meals on Wheels upon his retirement, delivering meals door to door through COVID-19. Soon after, he was asked to transition to volunteering at the Senior Center (SASC) kitchen, initially supporting the Council on Aging's lunch program. However, when the program faced funding cuts during the pandemic, Mitch stayed on, embracing the opportunity to reshape the culinary experience along with a team of staff and other volunteers.

Mitch volunteers one day a week starting around 10 am and works 3 to 4 hours. "I do salads, or whatever I am asked to help with, sometimes sandwiches. I think I'm a pretty good cook, but Jim is a wonderful chef. Folks just love his soup, so I stick to salad." Mitch speaks fondly of his fellow volunteers and staff, describing a genuine camaraderie and friendship that extends beyond their shared volunteering experience. "We're called the "A-Team," he says playfully, "I think they use that to describe all the kitchen crew."





The occasional missed shift due to personal appointments evokes a sense of responsibility and loyalty to his team, showcasing Mitch's work ethic. "I feel guilty if I can't make a shift. It's funny, as a volunteer, to have guilt by not attending, and yet, I think it's because we are like a big family in the kitchen," he says with pride.

Mitch's dedication to volunteering mirrors his father's unwavering commitment, emphasizing the importance of being present for those he cares about. His volunteer work isn't just a task; it's a source of profound fulfillment and joy, a testament to the enduring impact of family, community, and a fulfilling life of service.

"The opportunity to give back, make new friends, and contribute meaningfully to the lives of others is a reward in itself," Mitch shares with joy.

Thank you, Mitch, for being such an important part of our Sebastopol Area Community!



To learn more about
volunteer opportunities

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www.sebastopolseniorcenter.org



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

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