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Calvary Food Pantry: Recognizing the efforts of Auburn's RSVP group

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I went to the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, (RSVP, since 1972 in Auburn), recognition luncheon at the Holiday Inn. This was the 42nd time RSVP held the event honoring the volunteering spirit and the untold hours that volunteers work in Auburn. I have told you in these monthly **Heroes for Hunger** dialogues that RSVP member volunteers gives so much to me and my pantry. I could not do my work without them. So I was pleased to see 29 of my people attend this luncheon, and Shirley Stoezel was recognized for 25 years she has given to RSVP; her husband, Bill, gave 20 years. Pot roast, again, was the menu, but desserts have always changed.

Today I am presenting the CNY Food Bank's Volunteer of the Year award to Don Russell, who has been with me for over two years. Among other tasks, he maintains my pantry's welcoming, cheerful and very colorful atmosphere. He also approached his work with a great attitude, and good will. Then there is Betty Collins, who has been with my mission from the beginning, and Miriam Knapp, who has given the most hours in a year: 597. We honor them all for their dedication. We have a family atmosphere among all our volunteers. We take care of each other. The above individuals exemplify the uniqueness of our organization.

The first-graders and their sixth grade "supervisors," from St. Joseph School, were back in my pantry garden to check on the beans they had planted. Last time they came ready to plant with work clothes. This time they were here to check progress only, because they were in uniforms. Vicky Mathewson-Jackson, our head gardener, gave them more tasks that they enthusiastically undertook. My memory of these children will always be the handprints on their very starched uniforms and the glad smiles as they completed their tasks. I now have all six boxes planted. Vicky, who stepped in to help me when we lost our original head gardener, has to be congratulated. Those children left dusty and smudgy, but very happy.

Finally, this month, I celebrate my 30th year helping the hungry here in Auburn. Yes, I am grateful that I am the means of helping individuals and families, one meal at a time. It gives me satisfaction to know I do what I do well. Yes, it often is a struggle to level the playing field for a hungry person. I was hungry at one time and I can give some hope where I can. Yes, it is difficult seeing so much despair and anguish so much of the time, but I could never know any other work. I am where I want to be. I would have it no other way.

Accomplishments come daily. My volunteers and I are a fabulous team. But what makes me unique in Auburn amongst food pantries are my food racks. If anything, I am also very proud how my food racks work for my community. They hold so much fresh produce. Have you seen my food racks? Designed by a volunteer on my specifications, they are beautiful. Come visit my food racks, which serve so many of our guests. I am ready, now, for the next 30 years.

Volunteer, donate or reciprocate in kind.