

Alan and Sharon Buell- 25 Years

Father Fred is celebrating Alan and Sharon Buell for 25 years of volunteer service at the Father Fred Foundation. The couple became interested in volunteering after one of Alan's former classmates Kathy Belovich recommended the foundation. Sharon already knew Father Fred (the man) from working as a nurse at the State Hospital, where Father Fred served as Chaplain. One day the Buells stopped in at the foundation and talked to Father Fred himself. The rest is history.

Sharon began volunteering in the clothing department, and Alan helped out with furniture donations. In the beginning, they volunteered four days per week. "We had quite a bit of fun," Alan said. "It was our social life."

One of their favorite memories was during the foundation's annual Frostbite Food Drive, which takes place during the winter months. The couple shared that they, along with their fellow volunteers, dressed up in bathing suits and posed for a photo outside in front of the Father Fred truck. It was freezing, but it was a great publicity stunt with lots of laughs. Another memory shared was when Sharon found herself "dumpster diving." Alan had thrown away some old canning jars that were donated. Sharon, who had the reputation of salvaging nearly anything to make available to those in need, jumped in the dumpster when no one was looking to retrieve the jars! Sharon was also known for cleaning up donated dolls, often washing their clothes or cutting their hair to ensure they were in good shape for kids who came in with their parents. The stories go on and on about the special moments the Buells experienced while volunteering.

Long before volunteering, Sharon learned about those living in poverty while the couple lived in Malaysia and Brazil for Alan's job. "While he [Alan] was working in all these countries, I was learning about poverty," Sharon stated. Alan admitted that before volunteering, he could sometimes be judgmental. Once he began volunteering in intake services, where he worked one-on-one with guests, he heard firsthand their stories of how they found themselves facing hardships. It was those stories and experiences with guests that changed Alan's perspective about those in need.

The Buells agreed that Father Fred's legacy is still alive and well today at the Foundation. "One thing that those of us who have been here awhile, or even some of the new people, will often say is 'What would Father Fred do?'" Alan said. "Another thing that's stayed the same is that Father Fred attracts really wonderful volunteers," he added.

The Buells are relocating to Phoenix, Arizona full time, and will continue volunteering at a food bank there. We wish them the best of luck! They will truly be missed!