

## Mark Gregory Volunteer Story

If you need a do-it-all person, Mark Gregory is a worthy candidate. Mark is one of those volunteers who can seamlessly find a way to make you laugh and make you feel extremely loved in just a matter of minutes. Love and laughter are valued at Our Daily Bread, a place which Mark calls his second home, and where you don't have to go far to see them at work.

As Mark neared retirement in 2017, he knew he wanted to find something worthwhile to fill the days. A member of University Heights Baptist Church, the same church as Our Daily Bread executive director Becky Taylor, Mark was first introduced to ODB's mission when board member Kathy Sandefur came to speak at UHBC emphasizing missions opportunities in the community.

"This was while (ODB) was still just an idea," Mark said. "I told her the other day that I still have her card and I'm not one for normally taking cards. I just knew that was something I wanted to get involved with."

Among the most essential aspects of life is the availability of nutritious food and helping people who can't afford healthy food get access to it is something that staff and volunteers at ODB care a lot about.

Although the willingness to see a need like this and seek to alleviate it is worthy in itself, Mark said the way the staff focuses on loving each guest and volunteer in a unique way week after week shows their commitment to love.

Mark's commitment to building relationships and showing love to every guest he helps shop or even those he doesn't is one of the most noticeable things about his character. Part of this is due to his upbringing and time spent shadowing his dad at his work as an extension agent for OSU in the agriculture business.

"In the summertime I went with him a lot to see people and visit with farmers and ranchers about a different way to rotate crops or some new variety of something," Mark said. Adding, "One of the many things I learned from watching my Dad was to always treat people with respect and I hope that I always do that."

A lot of Mark's love and respect for people stems from his Christian faith and what he reads in his Bible about what it looks like to emulate Christ. A big thing about volunteering at ODB is the reminder that you don't know what word you say or gesture or action you make that could shape someone's day or week.

"That's the whole thing about life with Christianity is you never know what effect you're going to have on someone," he said. "And hopefully it's positive and not negative."

“And I think that’s something that Becky does or whoever runs the door is they always greet (the guest).”

The homely feeling that encompasses the shopping floor at ODB also helped when it came to Mark coming out of his proverbial shell. Normally a quiet and reserved guy when it comes to his routine life, Mark becomes more effervescent and friendly when he comes to volunteer. It’s all part of his loving mentality along with treating others with respect and dignity.

“It’s a family atmosphere and you know there’s no judgment for the guests, so for sure I’m not going to be judged as a volunteer,” Mark said.