



Smith Village resident busy serving the hungry

Pier Rosellini grew up in Lucca, Italy, a place he described “as a small village of poor farmers. We were very lucky. We were poor, but we never really starved like the people in the bigger cities. Still, I knew hunger, which is why I think it’s important to help others who regularly experience hunger.”

Rosellini’s desire to help others explains why for the last 20 years he’s been a steady volunteer for the Greater Chicago Food Depository, 4100 W. Ann Lurie Place, in the Archer Heights neighborhood. Every Wednesday, Rosellini is there from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., checking the accuracy of food orders before they ship out to local agencies and food pantries that provide access to groceries for needy individuals and families. He’s also on-call to fill in for other volunteers on Thursdays.

▶ In 2015, he and his wife, Marietta, moved to Smith Village, a life plan community at 2320 W. 113th Pl. But for 45 years, they lived in Archer Heights, not far from the food depository.

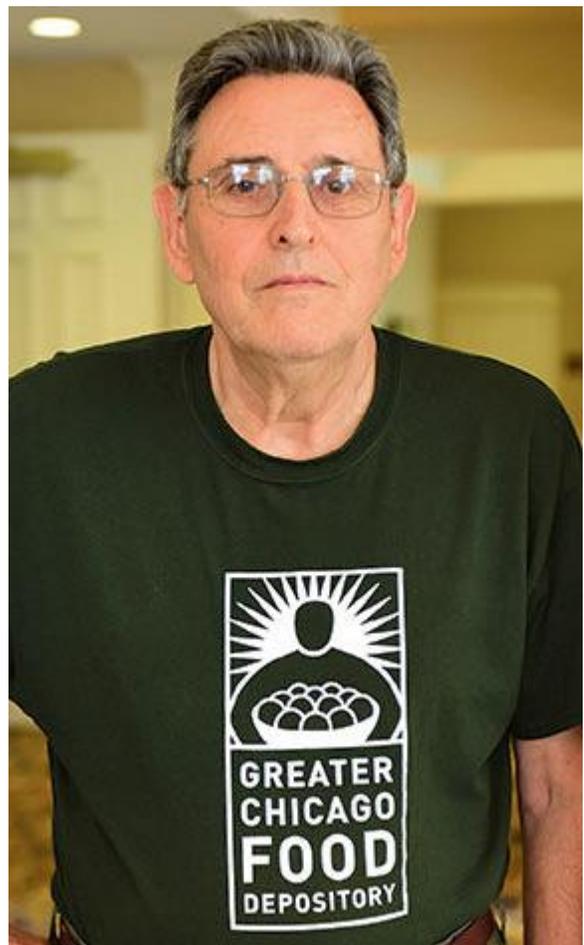
“My wife worked for United Airlines, and once a month they arranged for a bus to take employees to the food depository to volunteer,” said Rosellini.

When he retired from a 30-year career teaching languages and accounting for City Colleges, he started volunteering with her.

“We lived nearby, so sometimes we would just walk over,” he said.

The couple started out stuffing envelopes for mailings. They also went to food shows at the Merchandize Mart and McCormick Place, convincing vendors to donate unused packaged foods, including canned meats. The Rosellinis also worked at a donation table at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange.

“People are very generous,” said Rosellini.



Smith Village resident Pier Rosellini has volunteered for the Chicago Food Depository for 20 years. He also volunteers once a week in the Village Store at Smith Village. (photo by Gary Middendorf)



After a few years of volunteering together, Rosellini said, his wife decided to pursue other interests and he continued at the food depository's shipping department.

"I loaded food on to pallets. Then my back started giving me trouble, so I took on other duties," he said.

Rosellini checks to make certain the quantity of items packed for shipping matches what's specified on the printed request orders. The orders come from 700 agencies and programs—including pantries, soup kitchens and shelters—throughout Cook County.

"I love the guys I volunteer with," he said. "They're committed, great people. I also like the spirit, the mission of the food depository."

In 1958, at age 17, Rosellini moved to the Chicago area with his parents. In Italy, he was educated at a Jesuit high school, and still had one year to complete before graduating. As a new immigrant at age 19, and without completing his senior year, he tested into the City Colleges program at Wright College. There, he started working toward a bachelor's degree in the humanities, which he completed at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

Rosellini also studied Italian and French, earning a master's degree in humanities from the University of Chicago. He taught a year at Evanston High School and another year at Rosary College—now called Dominican University—before starting as an instructor at City Colleges.

Around age 30, Rosellini served as chair of the humanities department for City Colleges. Almost out of the blue, he shifted his focus to accounting, earning yet another master's in finance and accounting from Roosevelt University. For 30 years, he taught French, Italian, Spanish and accounting for City Colleges before retiring in 1998.

Besides helping at the food depository, Rosellini volunteers once a week in the Smith Village store, which sells snacks, cards, gifts, laundry detergent and personal items to visitors and residents. Store proceeds benefit Emilie's Fund, which helps to ensure that Smith Village residents who have outlived their means can remain at Smith Village.

For more information about Smith Village, call (773) 474-7300 or visit smithvillage.org.