Meet Marvi. She’s a client from the Loaves and Fishes Pittsburg dining room and this is her story...

I want to tell you my story and how Loaves and Fishes helped me and my family.

My husband and I lost our jobs as caregivers after I gave birth to our baby in 2016. For a while my brother-in-law allowed us to stay with him in his one-bedroom apartment, while we cared for our baby and looked for employment.

While looking for jobs, we applied to shelters, but the shelters had no vacancies. After we had to leave my brother-in-law’s apartment, we began to live in a tent along the creek in Pittsburg. We were always hungry; sometimes we got food from my brother-in-law, but he did not have much food to spare.

A friend who uses Loaves and Fishes services would sometimes give us groceries that she obtained from their free food pantry. She told me that the hot meal was very good and invited us to go with her to the Pittsburg dining room to eat; which the three of us did, beginning in the Fall of 2018.

I was surprised at how good the hot meal was at Loaves and Fishes! It was wonderful to have a hot meal, as we had become used to eating cold, packaged foods or sometimes, we would get a meal at a church, but it was seldom hot. I was so happy that the Loaves and Fishes meal was a full meal: hot entrée, salad, fruits, bread and dessert. The other good thing about Loaves and Fishes is the free food pantry where we could get a grocery bag of food to take home. It is also so wonderful that Loaves and Fishes serves this hot meal 5 days a week! Before we found out about Loaves and Fishes, we were lucky if we could eat once a week at a church.

Julie, the dining room manager in Pittsburg, was so kind and friendly to me, my husband and our baby. She introduced herself and asked about our situation; I told her we were looking for work as caregivers. A few weeks later Julie put me in touch with a caregiver agency, and I was hired to work at their care home!

What I want everyone to know is that Loaves and Fishes is like family to me, my husband and baby. If someone is hungry, Loaves and Fishes is a safe place to sit down, socialize and eat a nice, hot full meal. Also, you feel acceptance, not judgment. I hope you will support Loaves and Fishes so that others in hard situations can continue to get help like I did.
Meet Christian. A Recent Graduate of the Culinary Arts Program

Christian graduated from our Culinary Program last November and is now a line cook at a fun new restaurant at the Veranda Shopping Center in Concord. Christian is very grateful for the opportunity Loaves and Fishes Culinary Arts Training Program presented him with – a free 10-week culinary class that led him to his first job! Christian is 18 years old and recently graduated from high school. He joined the Culinary Arts Training Program after his mom graduated from the prior class and really enjoyed it. Christian was first introduced to cooking in high school and enjoyed how cooking gave him a connection to people. Christian believes that food is a very important part of life and what connects all us as humans – different races, cultures, life-styles, etc. Food can bring us all together.

Christian is very grateful for the Loaves and Fishes Culinary Arts Training Program. He learned a lot more than he knew previously. “There is a nice, natural flow to how the class is run with great instructors,” comments Christian. “I learned different techniques of how to cook: grill, fry, poach, roast, etc. Also, my knife skills improved,” he added.

During the last few weeks of the class, Christian learned how to research job opportunities, practiced interviewing and found his first job in the culinary field! “Loaves and Fishes helped me gain the necessary skills and helped build my confidence that I needed to do my new job well. I’m working around hot flames, hot water and there’s lots of pressure. I’m very grateful for everything Loaves and Fishes did for me,” said Christian. “Anyone interested in the culinary field should check out the class. There’s no risk and it will definitely help them,” he added.

The Culinary Arts Program: A Perfect Fit
TEACHING STUDENTS TO PREPARE WARM MEALS IN WINTER

The Loaves and Fishes Culinary Arts Program continues to evolve. When it was relaunched at the beginning of 2018 our focus was just on teaching fundamental culinary arts skills to those looking to learn them and utilizing the commercial kitchen housed in our Martinez dining room. However, over the last year the program has expanded to provide more by giving food back to the community.

The students have prepared delicious meals we’ve served at our past fundraising events and volunteer appreciation party. Initially during the 10-week course the students only prepared one meal that was served in the Loaves and Fishes Martinez dining room, we are now preparing weekly meals to feed the community.

As we move into 2019 we look forward to providing more meals to the Loaves and Fishes clients. If you know anyone who is interested in our programs please have them visit our website (loavesfishescc.org) and check out the Culinary Arts Program tab for more information or to apply. Help us help others learn to cook great food and give back to the community.

WISH LIST

Please consider helping Loaves and Fishes with our current list of needs:

ROCK OUT HUNGER Auction Support

Vacation homes? Time Shares? (Do you have an available vacation home, rental, or time share points for us to auction off a week’s stay at our upcoming fundraising events?)

We’re always looking for great experiences or themed gift baskets too. Theatre tickets, Warriors, Giants, A’s, 49er or Raider’s tickets? Please email info@loavesfishescc.org if you have anything to donate.

❤️

20 vinyl round table cloths (60-inch round tables)

❤️

Indoor paint refresh for our Martinez dining room

❤️

2-well cold food serving table to accompany our 3-well hot serving table

❤️

New (or new to us) laptops

❤️

Interactive Smart Whiteboard

835 Ferry Street, Martinez, CA 94553 • loavesfishescc.org • P: 925-293-4792 • F: 925-957-6155 • Tax ID# 68-0018077
In Loving Memory Of...
Elfrieda Malte
JULY 28, 1935 – JANUARY 4, 2019
Elfrieda “Frieda” Malte passed away surrounded by family on January 4, 2019. After retiring from teaching, Frieda began volunteering for Loaves and Fishes. She prided herself, along with her fellow volunteers, on offering a healthy and tasty meal. She was devoted to helping those in need. Loaves and Fishes staff, volunteers and clients were grateful to know Frieda and appreciated her service and everything she did to help others. She will be missed.

Friends and family can pay their respects at the celebration of life on Friday, May 3, 2019 at 11am at St. John Vianney, Walnut Creek.

SAVE THE DATES
Mark your calendars for Loaves and Fishes biggest fundraisers of the year!
-----------------------------------------------------
Drive Out Hunger  April 8, 2019
Rock Out Hunger  May 11, 2019

Building Strong Community Partnerships
CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT (CNA) TRAINING PROGRAM

In February, Loaves and Fishes started providing lunch for the students of a new nursing program in partnership with an existing partner, Opportunity Junction. (Loaves and Fishes has been providing 20 meals/day for students of Opportunity Junction for several years now.) The new nursing program is a collaboration between Opportunity Junction and Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa & Solano, in partnership with Mt. Diablo Adult Education through a grant from John Muir Community Health Fund.

This program is the first of its kind, creating a new model of delivery for CNA training incorporating wrap around services including one-on-one case management, food and transportation support, job placement assistance, and professional skills. Loaves and Fishes is pleased to be supporting this program by ensuring students’ bodies are nourished and ready to learn new skills.

E.D. LETTER
The year is off to a great start and it warms my heart to be the Executive Director here at Loaves and Fishes, especially when people say, “Thank you” or I ask them how lunch was today and they reply, “really good, thank you!” It is rare for Loaves and Fishes to receive a complaint about the meals we serve. We are not perfect, but I can truly say Chef James does a great job preparing 650-700 meals every day!

It’s never too late to make Loaves and Fishes a part of your New Year’s resolutions. A resolution of mine is to reconnect with old friends, whether that’s from high school, childhood friends or simply friends and family that I don’t see enough. For the wider community, Loaves and Fishes can fulfill the resolution of “giving back.” Loaves and Fishes depends on the community to help make our mission possible here in Contra Costa County. Hunger and food insecurity affect people of all ages, races and genders, and it could be affecting someone in your neighborhood. There is no one face of food insecurity. The need varies among children, older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, the working poor and many more. With Loaves and Fishes in your community, no one should be hungry. Our doors are always open; ready to serve a hot meal in a warm place. As the Executive Director I want Loaves and Fishes to do more for our clients. Some of my long-term goals to assist our clients are to have a Case Manager on staff, partner with other agencies, open more dining rooms and work together with other Contra Costa County nonprofits to expand the resources we offer to our clients.

The last two years I have spent many hours working on our Culinary Program and making it successful. The Culinary Staff, Chef Ted Elsner and Dawn Thompson, have done a great job educating students and leading them to graduation. We have had 17 students graduate from the program and 12 of them were assisted in either getting a job or doing something that gave them a new opportunity for a career pathway. It warms my heart to watch the students over the 10-week session. Their culinary skills develop, but also towards the end of class it’s rewarding to witness their confidence levels build, team work develop, friendships made, barriers broken and at graduation many thankful family and friends present to cheer on the graduates. This is a rewarding experience for all!

Both Loaves and Fishes programs (food and culinary) need your support. Let us help you fulfill the need of giving back to your community. There’s plenty of room for our community to join in, we depend on more than 100 volunteers each week to support our services and our donors are the financial backbone that keeps us going. Join us in helping those in need living in your community!

Joleen Lafayette, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

835 Ferry Street, Martinez, CA 94553 • loavesfishescc.org • P: 925-293-4792 • F: 925-957-6155 • Tax ID# 68-0018077
Did you know that it takes more than 150 volunteers each week to help us prepare, serve and deliver hot nutritious meals Monday through Friday to our five dining rooms?

We’re grateful to have volunteers who come from businesses, churches, gyms, groups of friends, Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs and local schools. Volunteer at Loaves and Fishes is unique in that our volunteers have the opportunity to interact directly with our clients, the people who benefit from our services. Volunteers are rewarded through the smiles and grateful “thank yous” that our clients share with them as they receive the nourishing food the volunteers have helped prepare and serve. Please consider donating your time to helping those in our community who are less fortunate.

Big Shout Out to our Concord Hilton Hotel Volunteer Team serving in our Pittsburg Dining Room! We truly appreciate all our volunteers!