

Interview with Steve Hirsch

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By Maddy Schiering

Steve has been volunteering with Meals on Wheels for over a year, but how he came to volunteer for the agency goes back a little further than that.

Steve had worked 15 years in sales in the garment district in NY, commuting long hours to and from his home in Rockland County. Then in 2011 Steve was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He continued to work while undergoing chemotherapy, but when he relapsed in 2014, it was just too much for him to work while undergoing treatment.

While home recovering Steve was not surprisingly feeling down. His Rabbi and cousin, who also happens to be a Rabbi, both suggested that he look for opportunities to give back to others, as often this helps when they are going through tough times. Given that Steve was still recovering and had some physical limitations, he needed to find the right opportunity. He found that opportunity at Meals on Wheels.

Steve started volunteering just an hour a week delivering meals to the homebound. Once he regained more strength. Steve took on a second Homebound Meal Delivery Program route. On that second route one of the participants he was delivering to invited him in, and this led to a 40 minute conversation about life and gratitude, among other topics. Steve really admired how grateful this homebound participant was, and it gave him such a feeling of purpose. Since then he has been delivering regularly, even taking his three children ages 11, 9 & 7 with him on school holidays so they can "see giving back in action."

Steve says that there are so many ways to volunteer at Meals on Wheels and that the flexibility makes it easy to fit volunteering into his schedule. He says, "Meals on Wheels is the perfect opportunity to give back, and that the people are fantastic." Steve told me that he always says yes to Sharon Martini, the Meals on Wheels Volunteer Coordinator, and that everything he does for Meals on Wheels comes back to him ten-fold. A perfect example is that Steve recently volunteered for at the Meals on Wheels table at the County's annual Youthfest event and it is there that he met three different people who have become an important part of his life and have even helped him with things he is struggling with.

We are happy to say that less than a year after undergoing treatment for cancer for the second time and a stem cell transplant to boot, Steve competed in an Olympic distance triathlon. In addition, he has raised over \$12,000 the past few years for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society to help combat blood cancers.

Steve feels that you get more out of giving than receiving, and that his experiences in the past few years have led him to pursue a new purpose in life: teaching. Steve is working towards a Master's degree in Education and his NYS teaching certificate. Steve is currently substitute teaching while in school, and if you ask the students in Mrs. Walker's 4th grade class at Valley Cottage Elementary School, they will probably tell you that Mr. Hirsch is the best substitute teacher ever! Having met Steve, I don't doubt it.