

## **Jackson Nonprofit Support Center: Matching talent with community need**

*By Brandon Seng, ConnectMichigan Alliance*

“When I signed a volunteer application, I thought I’d be cleaning toilets or painting somewhere,” explained Christina. “I had no idea that I could volunteer somewhere that needed my experience.”

Christina has specialized and extensive experience. As a former model, she used her talents to start her own dance program before her retirement. Christina was brought to the Volunteer Center at the Jackson Nonprofit Support Center with her son, in search of information about their AmeriCorps programs. She became inspired by the work of the Volunteer Center, and filled out a volunteer application before she left.

A connection was made by the Volunteer Center, which would put Christina’s unique talents to work for a local nonprofit. The St. Vincent de Paul retail store was scheduled to host fashion show, and was struggling with event logistics and the recruiting of runway models. The connection was made by Pegg Clevenger, the Volunteer Center Program Director at the Jackson Nonprofit Support Center, and Christina was happy to donate her time. A perfect match for Christina’s unique talents, St. Vincent de Paul’s fashion show was a opportunity for both the organization and volunteer to take away a positive experience.

A church filled to capacity responded splendidly to the fashion show. As the models walked the runway offers began coming in to buy some of the outfits on the spot. This was an unexpected surprise for St. Vincent’s Retail Store, and this money helped them to generate more in this fundraising effort than expected. When all the money was tallied, the fashion show netted a total of \$2500 for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, who will use the money to continue supporting their retail stores and food banks.

Through this success, the Jackson Nonprofit Support Center has shown that strategically matching volunteers not only benefits community organizations through the access of specialized talents, but also increases volunteer retention, as the volunteer becomes a champion of the cause.

*Story provided by the Volunteer Centers of Michigan, an affiliate of the ConnectMichigan Alliance.*