

Karen Lane

Karen Lane has been volunteering her at Central Iowa Shelter & Services for about a year now. After she retired from the Des Moines Public Library, she wanted to stay involved in the community in a helpful way. She specializes in helping to run our food pantry. “I love helping in the food pantry. I get to help people feed themselves and their families for the day, for the month,” says Lane. “When people come in, I help them get their monthly quota. But every day is different. For example, today I helped someone apply for food stamps. I had never done that before.”

Volunteering at the shelter can come with challenges. “A lot of the clients we serve have language barriers. So when we don’t speak the same language, we have to get creative with how we communicate,” says Lane. But the challenges don’t deter her, or any other volunteer for that matter, from reaching out a helping hand and showing up to serve others. “It’s so rewarding when you can help someone who appreciates the help we’re giving them. The vast majority of the people we serve are beyond grateful for how we help.” The best thing about the job, Karen says, are the smiles. “When people are in the pantry and they ask if they really can have the food, the smile they get when I tell them ‘yes, this food is for you’ is the best thing about working here.”

When she isn’t volunteering her time here, she can be found doing genealogical research on her family, sewing, working in her large garden, knitting, and reading as many different books as she can!