

## HUG Volunteer Profiles

### Nicole Van Dyke

Volunteering at the HUG garden is giving me a rest from my busy schedule in DC. I enjoy taking a couple hours off to connect with people in the community over a shared interest in gardening. We produce nutritious veggies to share through the food banks. I've learned quite a bit about what each plant needs to succeed and grow. Some need light, pruning, calcium in the soil, trellises and the list goes on and on. I enjoy thinking about the plants even when I'm not at the garden.

### Mike Leyba

I grew up with gardening with my mother and continued to help her throughout my early adulthood. As I knew she loved gardening but often needed help, I would continue to help her whenever I visited her from living far from home. As she inevitably grew more vegetables than she could use, she shared with friends and members of her church. People began to depend on her weekly donations of vegetables and she adjusted the types of vegetables she grew based on the needs of her small community.

I also helped friends of mine grow a food forest while I lived in Germany as both an attempt to grow healthy food but also as a means to improve the soil near their home and create a mini-climate near their home. Helping my German friends grow this forest, as well as a garden alongside it, reminded me of growing with my mother after losing her a couple of years ago to illness. In this way, I suppose I enjoy volunteering with HUG as both a means of continuing to help our community with healthy vegetables and to continue the work she enjoyed.

### Renee Bouchard, Assistant Neighborhood Coordinator

Some of my fondest memories are summer vacations at our family dairy farm. There I 'helped' my grandparents with the chickens and crops, and wondered at the beauty of the cows coming home in the evening. My grandmother had a bountiful garden. This is where I learned the joy of being in a garden. Fast forward to Feb 2020, I had just sold my tree farm and moved full time to Arlington. The HUG project was a perfect fit for me. It got my hands back in the dirt and met my interest in solving food insecurity. HUG is a well organized urban project that lets volunteers participate at all levels. HUG allows for those with an initial interest in growing and those more experienced to enjoy participating, teaches experiments in a variety of gardening techniques, creates a sense of community and comradely, and is giving back by donating produce to various food pantries.