

A Slice of Life

Felix Cruz



Felix believes that the start of a new day is not only a blessing but also an opportunity to continue learning as a means to create the best version of yourself for your family, friends and co-workers.

For nearly eight years, Felix has been a driver for Hearty Helpings and its predecessor companies, delivering prepared meals to community-based organizations, home delivered and congregate meal sites across the region.

While close relationships with his mother and immediate family members throughout his life helped influence his positive outlook, it was an incident in the late 1980s that further shaped his genuine character.

On a cold night, Felix was walking on a sidewalk in Buffalo when he was struck by a vehicle. The driver of the vehicle – which was determined by police to be stolen – did not stop after the collision. The force of the impact caused him to be wedged under the vehicle, and he was dragged on the pavement for a few hundred feet before his body was eventually dislodged.

Following numerous surgeries that repaired his hip, left arm, and lower back, Felix was on the road to recovery. Despite pain at some of the surgery locations, Felix said he maintains a strong work ethic to ensure that people in need receive the necessary help from Hearty Helpings.

“I have all of my physical abilities, and life is good,” he said. “I take each day as a blessing and I am thankful that I have the opportunity to do what I do,” he said. “I feel honored that I have the capacity to help people in this way.”

Felix first joined our organization in January 2016 as an employee through a temporary employment agency. While his first roles were assisting in the production of meals and acting as

a substitute driver, he was officially hired four months later and moved to the position of full-time driver.

“I think everyone was able to see that I had the skill set and work ethic to really help out and be a part of our organization for more than just a temporary basis,” he said.

His previous jobs included Serving as a bus aide and bus driver, in addition to a 22-year stretch as a taxi driver.

“Life to me is a spectrum of you. No one is perfect, and that’s why it’s important to always keep learning.”

Felix has volunteered for a number of organizations over the years, including the Boy Scouts, which he joined when he was ten years old. As an adult, Felix was a Scout leader for about a decade.

Outside of work, he also likes to be outdoors, enjoying the peace of mind that his daily five-mile walks provide him.

“I also like to do what I can to participate in enriching the community,” he said.

Felix said that his two sons, ages 34 and 33, are his greatest source of pride and accomplishments. As he thinks of his children and the genuine, good-natured people they are, tears well up in his eyes.

My sons are the reasons that I did all that I did, and why I still do everything I do,” he said. “Life to me is a spectrum of you. No one is perfect, and that’s why it’s important to always keep learning.”

*A Slice of Life is a feature that will be included in each edition of Extra Helpings. Each piece will profile a Hearty Helpings employee and their experiences and responsibilities. To suggest an employee who should be profiled in this section, reach out to **Don Rudewicz** directly or email drudewicz@heartyhelpings.org. Please state the reason for suggesting the employee be profiled by Extra Helpings. ❤️*





“ I’m sure I will miss it here. But I may come back in some time for a quick visit, you never know! ”

A Toast to Retirement: Employee reflects upon work at Hearty Helpings

With emotions that include a mixture of happiness and anticipation, Millie Stoklosa is getting ready to take on a new position – retiree.

Millie’s work with Hearty Helpings will end on Friday, Jan. 26, when she caps a nearly 13-year history of working in the production of prepared meals.

“Unfortunately, it’s time,” she said. “But I am excited about retirement.”

She said the unfortunate decision to retire was spurred by health issues.

Millie’s responsibilities at Hearty Helpings included a wide range of food preparation and packout responsibilities including food wrapping on the infamous DoBoy machine.

Although her health issue is leading her into a new phase of life, Millie has no plans of slowing down in other areas of her life.

A mother of four adult children, Millie plans to use her extra time to listen to music and watch her favorite daytime soap operas.

“I am also looking forward to watching ‘The Price is Right’ in the mornings,” she said.

Millie added that retirement also will allow her to spend more time with her pets.

“I love animals,” she said. “I have two cats, a dog and three parrots. And I actually named one of my cats ‘Alvin,’ after my coworker who gets me to work.”

After deciding that driving was becoming too difficult due to her vision, she asked Alvin Kenner to take her to and from work each day.

“I live only about a mile away,” Millie said. “Alvin and his wife are always so nice. I am thankful for their help.”

Millie also said she plans to enjoy a seasonal pastime that can sometimes be measured in feet: shoveling snow.

“I really like shoveling,” she said. “I have a snowblower, but I usually don’t use it. I just go out there and take my time with shoveling it.”

Millie added that she will miss seeing some of her co-workers each day

“I’m sure I will miss it here. But I may come back in some time for a quick visit,” she quipped. “You never know!”

Millie, you are always welcome and this will always be your second home! Thank you for your service. ❤️



happy birthday

Jan. 9 - **Sharon Wojtasik**, Food Service Worker
Jan. 9 - **Mildred Stoklosa**, Food Service Worker
Jan. 13 - **Sileshi Fita**, Food Service Worker
Jan. 14 - **Myron Perry**, Warehouse Supervisor
Jan. 18 - **Christina Henry**, Prep Cook

