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Hot dog store owner relishes his other role

Local businessman lends helping hand through food distribution, other collections

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By **MIKE SULLIVAN** For Sun-Times Media

No doubt about it. Dame Fortune has smiled on Sam Fallico, who recently opened his second "Big Sammy's Hot Dogs" in Elk Grove Village.

The 49-year-old Fallico also operates an eatery with same name at 2490 Bushwood Drive, Elgin, just north of I-90 off Randall Road.

It could be said that he learned the business by osmosis.

"I've been around the food business all my life," Fallico declared, noting he has been an entrepreneur since age 25.

Fallico says his success has prompted a desire to help others not so fortunate by donating time and money. He has targeted Elgin's Larkin Center, an agency that helps youths with emotional and mental disorders, and the Grafton Township Food Pantry in Huntley. The latter organization keeps Fallico quite busy.

"I go over to the food pantry in the morning, help them unload the truck and hand out food all day long," he said.

Fallico says he also placed canisters at his stores over the holidays, proceeds from which enabled the pantry to buy \$100 worth of food.

On Thanksgiving, Fallico donated 50 turkeys, courtesy of his food company, for distribution to needy families. In addition, all three of his hot dog stores contributed \$600 each to benefit the pantry.

Through his efforts, Fallico raised a total of \$4,800 which was presented to pantry officials "to spend any way they want," Fallico recalled.

He also volunteers his time at Larkin Center, assisting in the agency's annual holiday toy drive.

He says the enjoyment he receives as a fundraiser and volunteer is hard to quantify. "It brings me enjoyment to be part of different communities -- to give back -- to help other people," he explained.

Fallico says as he has gotten older, he realized that he could "make a change in this world."

"There are a lot of people out there that need food today," he observed. "And they're right in our own backyard."

It was during the ribbon-cutting of the new food pantry facility at 10109 Vine St., Fallico recalled, that motivated his involvement.

"When I saw it, I said, 'You know what? This is something I want to be part of. What can I do to help?'"

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