The event that comes to my mind as my favorite volunteering moment would have to be Florence after Five. I had brought my husband along with us to volunteer once, and I had been volunteering for a couple of months at that point and had asked him if you would join me. At one point in the event, I could take a step back and just looked around at everybody else around me. People were laughing, joking, and just smiling! I look over and see my husband smiling and laughing, too. At that moment, I realized how much of a bigger picture it all was. I was just a tiny part of that whole event, but it mattered that I was there. I could see everybody else having a good time around me, and being a part of that was awesome.

Volunteering is something big in my head and heart; when I volunteer, I like to give my time to organizations or causes that I believe in or are close to me. So when I volunteer, I'm with other people I know who are also, in some way, like me. It allows for bonding, you know, with those people and getting to know other people in the community who also think like I do. That's another reason I like it so much I typically get along with those people and have actually ended up finding myself having more of a friendships because of it. We sometimes get together for lunch or other things like that. I created those relationships that I otherwise wouldn't have known without taking advantage of volunteer opportunities.

Through volunteering, I see more of what I can do in the community, which recharges me. Especially when I've had a hard week, or it feels like a long day. And then, I have my volunteering event! I feel regenerated afterward. It's being able to see those bonds that you get to have with those people and having that laughter, and then after the event, I might be tired, but I can take a breath and go, "I really enjoyed that." And it recharges me and makes me remember why I do it. I hope to pass that on to other people. I hope that my positivity can seep into other people as well. That's beautiful.

I remember seeing Dargan Street when I first moved here, but it was nothing like it is now. I

remember it feeling empty. But not being from here. I didn't know it in any other way. So, to me, that's just how Dargan was. Now, where it is, I'm so happy to be a part of it. It invites you in.

It made me want to go downtown Florence, and now, you see people walking along the sidewalks. And they'll say hi to you. You get that sense of community from people you don't even know. But everybody who walks downtown or participates in something downtown knows that you have something in common and that you're enjoying yourself downtown. So, having gone from where it was to where it is now.

I am happy to be a part of that sense of community and positivity, and I hope more people want to be a part of it

Lucinda Hubbs, Downtown Florence Volunteer