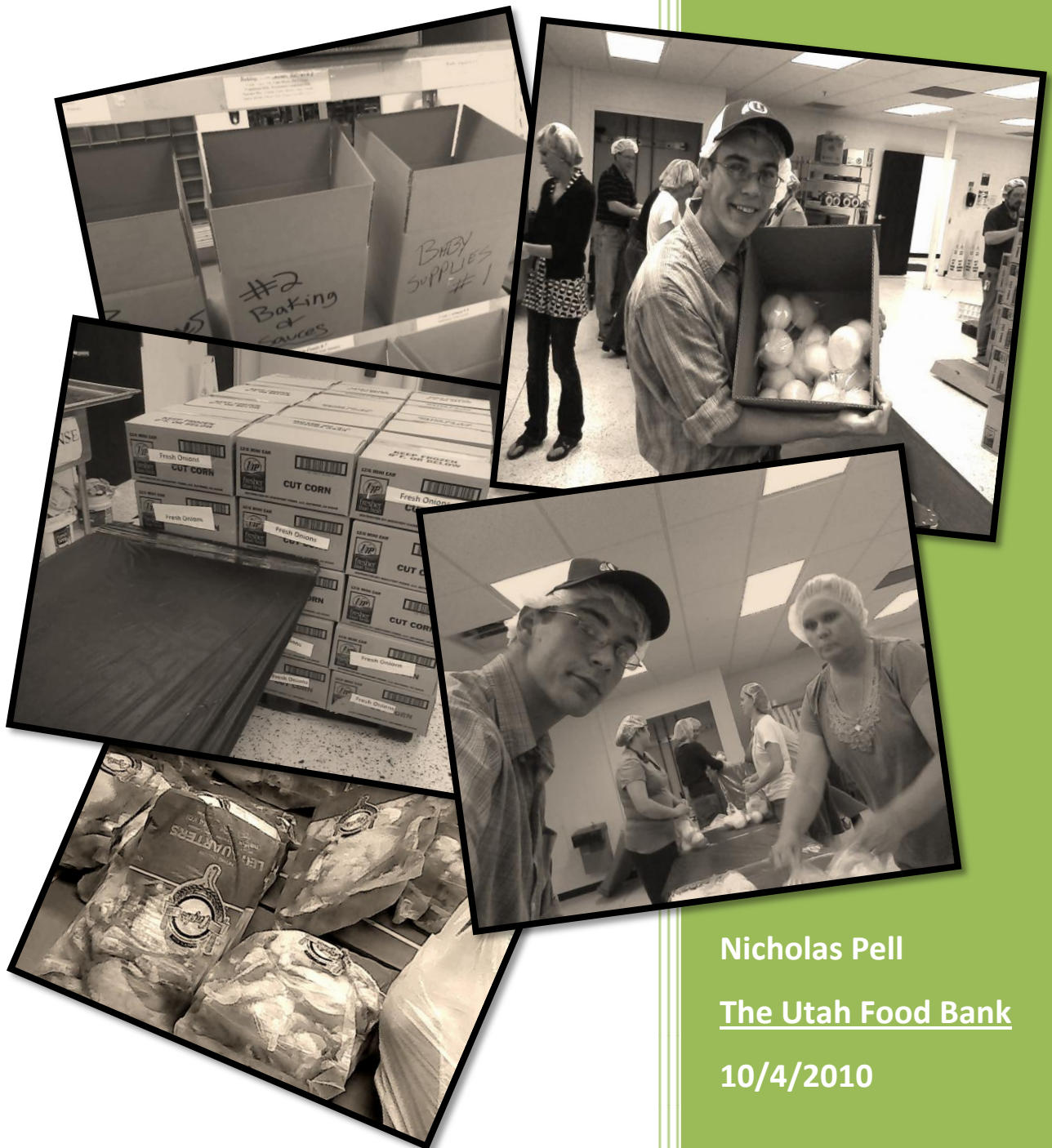


2010

I got canned on a Thursday



Nicholas Pell

The Utah Food Bank

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On Thursday, 30 September 2010, I volunteered for 4 hours (10:00 AM until 2:15 PM) at the **Utah Food Bank** located on 3150 South 900 West in Salt Lake City. I chose this activity because it

seemed to be the most realistic and easily accessible option for me. I also wanted to donate time to help those who were less fortunate. I planned my day and called ahead of time to ensure that there would be projects that I could do. Because I went by myself, and not with a group, I was asked to join



Me breaking down cardboard boxes for the frozen dinner project

another group I did not know. Our first task was to bag frozen dinners. Each grocery sack was to contain one bag of chicken (very large) one petite size bag of frozen vegetables, and one box of ready-made pasta (frozen). Each member of the team first started



Displaying a completed and bagged frozen dinner

out with the idea that he or she was going to bag the most dinners individually, and that through a competition in this manner, one member would “win.” We started out throwing items in bags and trying to force our way to get at each of the above listed items. We soon found out that this form of packing didn’t really work out for us. We the decided to step

back for a bit until one bright member of the group came up with the idea that each of us should be delegated our own special job. After that, things ran much more smoothly for us. One pair opened the grocery bags. Another put one bag of vegetables in the bottom of the bag. The subsequent pair then placed one huge bag of chicken in the bag and then the final pair inserted a box of frozen pasta in the bag and tied it off. One guy was delegated to be the

understanding of the need that Utah's poor have for food items and baby care necessities. This part was an especially humbling experience.

Finally, I was directed to join yet another group, this one larger than the one previous, who



Me beside a pile of yellow onions (bagged)

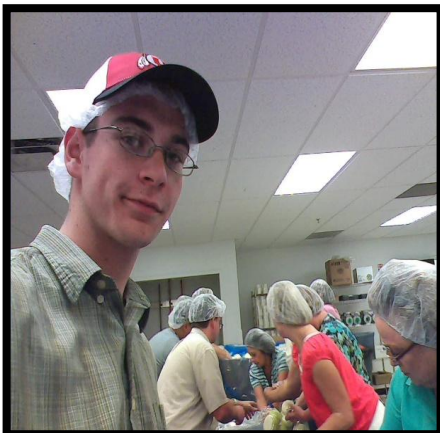
were employed by American Express. We worked on "The Onion Project." Apparently this was a dreaded project that many frowned



Displaying a box of onions ready to be taped and stacked

upon, but we decided to have a positive attitude nonetheless and work, work, work! The larger group was divided in half and each was

given a variety of onions. One group was to bag and box the red onions, while the other was to do the same with the yellow variety. I had the privilege of working



On the onion line

with the "Yellow Onion Group." This group seemed to have the specialization concept down from the get-go. Almost immediately, people were organizing themselves to be "the onion grabber," "the bagger," "the tier," "the boxer," "the taper," and finally "the stacker." I decided that I would be best

at boxing the onions (I was to place only four bags in a box), but soon noticed that I was also taping the boxes shut and helping to stack them as well (which was another guy's job). Our group was so efficient that we had bags of onions ready to be boxed while "the boxers" struggled to construct the boxes to house the onions. We cheered one another on by singing, "Let's go yellow, let's go..." It was

amazing! From this experience I was given a sneak peak on the complexity and depth of the work that goes on at a food bank. I got to experience how useful it is to have specialized labor and concentration on one task. It was not uncommon, however, to see that a member of one group would jump in to help out another person who was having a hard time on their task. I got to thinking that specialization is important for efficiency, but that versatility in the project (i.e. being able to complete two or more different tasks instead of just one) was even more so. I was able to be a part of something bigger (i.e. the “Feeding America” project).

While the service I did at the Utah Food Bank was required for class, I believe that I would still have done it even had I not been required to do so. Not only did I work with a variety of different people, but I was able to experience how those people were able to work together for one cause and get along with one another. I saw specialization work in person, firsthand. It was fascinating! I started out thinking that I would just keep to myself, get my hours accomplished, and get on with my day. After I came out of my figurative “shell,” I decided to work with others to get the different tasks done and realized that each was simplified almost one-hundred fold because we worked together. I also learned the importance of donating services and time (Labor, one of the four Economic resources).

I think that, all too often, we, as common workers, get caught up in the monotony in life and focus way too much on certain thing that need to get done (i.e. homework that needs to get accomplished, and other high-stress concerns). I learned the importance of stepping out of my own little “bubble” and into that of another person. I broke this week’s cycle of work, school, work, school, and was able to donate a part of myself to assist those in need. I acquired a very intangible and equally precious understanding of the importance of helping others and focusing on their needs as opposed to my own by donating time at the Utah Food Bank one Thursday afternoon.

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