



Learning at Your Fingertips

Getting Involved in Volunteering



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## Overview

Whether you donate money or time, giving back is beneficial--and not just for the recipients. Research has shown that the old adage, “it’s better to give than to receive” is true after all.



## Why Get Involved?

A Gallup survey on volunteering in the U.S.A. found that 52% of volunteers do it because they like doing something useful and helping others. Another 38% said they enjoy doing volunteer work and feeling good about themselves.



## Why Get Involved?

Besides feeling good about yourself for doing something for others, giving back is also good for your physical health. In a Canadian study, 85% of Ontario volunteers rated their health as "good," compared to 79% of non-volunteers. Only 2% of volunteers reported "poor" health, one-third the amount of non-volunteers who reported the same health status.



## Why Get Involved?

Still other studies have shown a relationship between volunteering and increased self-esteem, with volunteers reporting both greater personal empowerment and better health. Doing for others may stimulate the release of endorphins, which has been linked to improved nervous and immune system functions, too.



## Why Get Involved?

Many people report a “high” from volunteering, similar to the good feelings that come from exercise. Others have found that volunteering can help fight depression. Helping others can help take your mind off your own problems and enable you to see the bigger picture. Once you see the difference you can make in another person's life, your own problems can seem smaller and more manageable.



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## 7 Reasons to Volunteer

**1. Develop new skills.** Gaining skills, knowledge and expertise are common side effects of volunteering. Giving others your time brings you interesting and challenging opportunities that might not come along otherwise. This experience can be added to your resume and could result in a better paying job in the future.



# 7 Reasons to Volunteer

**2. Make social connections.** Loneliness and boredom are common among retirees, students, and transplants to a new city. Volunteering can relieve this sense of social isolation and help you fill empty hours in the day.



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## 7 Reasons to Volunteer

**3. Give back to your community.** Doing something for the community you live in and returning the favor to those who have helped you are strong motivators. Everyone, rich or poor, takes from society, and volunteering is one way to show a sense of appreciation.



## 7 Reasons to Volunteer

**4. Develop and grow as a person.** Volunteering is an excellent way to explore your likes and dislikes. If you're interested in a new career, volunteer in the field first to see if you will actually like it. You may find a totally unrelated field is a much better fit for you, one you'd never consider if you hadn't volunteered there first.



## 7 Reasons to Volunteer

**5. Gain a new perspective.** Life can be hard and when you're feeling down, your problems can seem insurmountable. Volunteering can offer a new perspective—seeing people who are worse off than you are, yet still hanging in there, can help you see your life in a whole new light.



## 7 Reasons to Volunteer

**6. Know that you're needed.** Feeling needed and appreciated are important, and you may not get that appreciation from your paid work or home life where the things you do are expected or taken for granted. When you volunteer, you realize just how much you are truly needed. Meeting people who need your help is a strong incentive to continue—people are depending on you. If you don't do it, who will?





## 7 Reasons to Volunteer

**7. Boost your self-esteem.** Many volunteers experience a sense of increased self-esteem and greater self-worth. Helping others makes you feel good about yourself, because you're doing something for someone that they couldn't do for themselves.



# Getting Started

Sometimes the most difficult question can be where to start. There are plenty of opportunities out there, and plenty of worthy causes that need help from someone just like you. Ask yourself a couple of questions:

1. What are you passionate about?
2. What are your interests?
3. What are your time constraints?



# Getting Started

## 1. What are you passionate about?

Do you have a special connection to any organization? Maybe someone in your family suffers from a particular disease that you would like to support.

What community problem would you like to help solve?



# Getting Started

## 2. What are your interests?

Is there a way that you tie in your interests, hobbies or profession to getting involved with the community? Volunteering does not have to be boring or uninteresting to you.

Ex. You love carpentry. Why not work for Habitat for Humanity building a house.



# Getting Started

## 3. What are your time constraints?

Sometimes, determining what you have time for may be a key piece. Find opportunities that work around your schedule.

Ex. If you work nights, volunteer at a school. If you work days, see if there i



## Volunteering on Your Own

If you've never been involved in community service before, volunteering as an individual may be a good place to start. Want to improve your computer knowledge? You may get free on-the-job training.



## Volunteering on Your Own

Have you been out of the workforce raising children? Volunteering may be a painless way for you to get back into the routine of working before taking the plunge into a paid position.



## Volunteering on Your Own

And if you're looking for a career change, community service is a networker's dream. You can meet people who may offer opportunities you've never thought of. You can sample different workplaces and see how you like various fields. Your volunteering will definitely help others and may help you, too.





## Volunteering With Family

Families can do many volunteer jobs. Even the smallest child (with adult supervision) can pick up garbage at the park, playground, or beach. You don't even have to be part of a big effort to do this. Get your family together, find some garbage bags, and head out.



## Volunteering With Family

Or become involved in repair and renovation efforts for low-income residents. Younger kids might not be able to do the big jobs, but helping out by fetching a paintbrush or holding the nails involves them just the same.



## Volunteering With Family

Work at a community food bank or soup kitchen as a family. Find an organization that serves the elderly. Take food to people who are homebound and visit with them. Your kids can brighten a lonely senior's day instantly



## Volunteering With Family

Offer your family's help at the local animal shelter. Help plant flowers or trees. The possibilities are endless.



# Getting Involved

The Internet offers lots of sites with information about volunteer opportunities. You can also call a favorite charity, hospital, or church directly to see if they have any needs, or just google "Volunteerism"



# Getting Involved

Be prepared to answer questions such as:

- What are your interests?
- What are your skills?
- Do you have any special needs?
- Do you have a method of transportation?
- How many hours a week do you have to volunteer?
- Why do you want to volunteer?



## Getting Involved

You'll probably be interviewed again once the clearinghouse matches you with an appropriate job. Some situations require more information. If you want to work with kids, for instance, you may have to undergo fingerprinting and a criminal background check.



# Getting Involved

Be sure to be just as thorough when you question the organizations. Find out exactly what's expected of you before you accept the volunteer position. Be realistic and ask specific questions.





## Getting Involved

When looking for a volunteer position, remember that it may be difficult to find the perfect volunteer slot. Be flexible, and keep looking if the agency you were referred to doesn't meet your needs. It may take a while to find a perfect fit, but once you do, it will be worth it.



## Getting Involved

Once you do become involved, be responsible to those who depend on you. Be on time, dress appropriately, and let the volunteer coordinator know if you can't make it.



# Summary

Whatever you choose to do, volunteering and community service can benefit both the community and your family. Get involved today!

