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www.NICENetwork.org

Discover the Perfect Volunteer Opportunity for YOU!

Volunteering has been a part of America's civic culture since the early days of barn raisings and quilting bees. Neighbors have nearly always been willing to pitch in and help others in times of need. Helping others is not out of fashion. In fact, a new trend in volunteerism is sweeping America and you can be a part of it!

Consider Time, Interests, and Skills

When choosing a volunteer opportunity, consider the amount of time you have to volunteer, your interests, and your skills. Volunteering is a perfect way to enjoy an activity and contribute to a cause that you are passionate about. Think you have no talent or particular skill set? You probably have more talents than you realize, but don't worry. There are many opportunities that simply require a caring heart and an able body.

Questions to consider when thinking about volunteering:

- How much time do you have to contribute?
- Do you want to do something on a regular or just an occasional basis?
- Do you have any particular skills or talents that you would like to share?
- What cause or population would you like to work with? A better environment, a neighborhood cleanup project, the elderly, young children, animals, teens, the homeless?
- Do you want the activity to include just you or your family as well?
- Do you prefer to volunteer as a team or by yourself?

Types of organizations that utilize volunteer services:

- Churches
- Social Service Agencies
- Civic-minded Groups
- Cultural/Artistic Groups
- Schools
- Health Care Organizations and Institutions
- Political Organizations

Family Volunteer Ideas

- Participate in organized charity runs or walks.
- Collect food for the food bank in your community.
- Visit the elderly at a local nursing home; adopt a grandparent.
- Baby-sit free on occasion for a harried single mom.
- Rake leaves, plant flowers, or shovel snow for an elderly or disabled neighbor.
- Walk dogs or cuddle kitties at the local animal shelter.
- Write letters for or read to a sight-impaired person.

How to Get Started

Ask Your Friends and Relatives

The least threatening way to find a volunteer opportunity is to ask your friends or relatives where they volunteer and go with them. Or, ask a friend to go with you when you find a place you think you'd like to volunteer. Walking into a new place alone can be intimidating. But just know that nonprofits want your help and will encourage and welcome you! Most will work to match your skills to their needs.

Check with those you know if they are aware of needs in the community and what agencies or churches head up the programs. Call them, introduce yourself, and ask if they have regular need of volunteers. Don't be discouraged if you don't strike gold immediately. It's ok if you don't feel like jumping at a particular opportunity right away. It's important that you have an interest in what you'll be doing.

1800Volunteer.org and VolunteerMatch.com

Another way to find a volunteer opportunity is to use either of these web sites. Both start with your zip code to provide you with local options. They also track your volunteer service and send e-mail notifications whenever your time and talent would be needed. If the thought of volunteering is daunting, these sites narrow down the possibilities for you so you can do a little research on the organization's web site before you commit.

Simple Steps to Get Involved (you have a double space after this sub-title but not after others)

Follow these steps and you'll be volunteering in no time!

- Visit the Search page and enter your ZIP code. Go to: <http://www.volunteermatch.com>
- Find a listing that interests you and click on its title for additional details. Next, click "I like this opportunity."

Register as a VolunteerMatch.com member and an automatic email will be sent to the volunteer organization notifying them of your interest. They will contact you if there is an opening for volunteers.

Finding the Right Opportunity

Now that you understand how the service works, screen the opportunities that suit you best. Follow up promptly with the nonprofit after you've referred yourself to an opportunity.

- Choose a cause that you're passionate about.
- Find an opportunity that matches your skills, interests, and schedule.
- List your skills for the nonprofit for which you'd like to volunteer.

How to Be a Great Volunteer

Part of having a great volunteer experience relies on your ability to be a great volunteer. These basic principles are good to keep in mind:

- Be professional.
- Honor your volunteer commitments. Show up on time and call in when you are ill.
- Extend gratitude to an organization for any training or professional development you receive.

Volunteer Stories

Ruth Volk

Ruth Volk first heard about VolunteerMatch.com on television. A stay-at-home mom, Ruth had recently delivered her fourth child, and found herself wanting to contribute to her community.

She was interested in opportunities involving knitting, crocheting, and sewing. Within a day of expressing interest on VolunteerMatch, she heard back from "Newborns in Need," an organization which provides clothing and blankets for infants of needy families.

"I didn't feel I was doing enough," said Volk. "While I loved to crochet, I didn't have anyone who needed any more of my handmade items, so I was reduced to crocheting lace doilies that sat in my sewing room drawer."

Six years later, not only has Ruth cleaned out her sewing room drawer, she is now a board member for the organization, renamed Bundles of Love. To date, Bundles of Love has received hundreds of volunteer referrals through VolunteerMatch.

"I tell everyone about VolunteerMatch - it's such a great resource for helping people who want to serve find a place where they are most needed," she said.

Philip Marcus

Philip Marcus, a resident of San Francisco for more than seven years, was always interested in the history of the city. So he decided to educate himself in the most exciting, rewarding manner he thought possible--he decided to start volunteering.

Marcus volunteers for not one, not two, not three...but four nonprofit organizations in San Francisco! Giving his time with City Guides, Golden Gate Parks, the Hospice Project, and the Conservatory of Flowers keeps Marcus very busy.

"I really enjoy being involved and getting to know the city better," said Marcus. "And the amount I've learned as a volunteer is just incredible."

He also notes that his extensive experience and exhaustive knowledge of San Francisco makes him especially popular with visiting friends and relatives.

"I'm always the official tour guide, and I love it," he said.

***Remember, your volunteer help is needed
and you can make an important difference.***

Have a great volunteer experience!

About the Author

Debra Berg is a coach for nonprofit causes and leaders, an author, speaker, and the foremost authority on The New Civic America. In the nineties, her self-funded trek across America engaged over 100 citizen-inventors of social solutions to our toughest social challenges. In the process, she uncovered a new trend of nonprofit innovation and volunteerism. Now a respected expert and speaker, Debra has appeared in the *Chicago Sun Times* and on over seventy-five radio and TV talk shows. Her groundbreaking research is featured in her book, *The Power of One: The Unsung Everyday Heroes Rescuing America's Cities*. She is also a co-author in the best-selling book "Living in Abundance."

The author holds two public policy degrees, the Certificate of Excellence in Nonprofit Administration, and is trained in social media promotion for nonprofits. Debra staffed the Watergate hearings on Capitol Hill and later served as an analyst for three state legislatures where she co-authored studies on education and social policy.

Debra is known as the "Cause Coach" by her clients. She works with new and existing causes to improve their visibility and viability. She is the Charity Guide on *SelfGrowth.com*. In 2007, she launched the National Institute for Civic Enterprise, a national research and human services nonprofit network. Her numerous articles and e-books target civic/social entrepreneurs, donors, socially conscious businesses, and volunteers.

Debra Berg is available to inspire your organization as a speaker, to appear on radio/TV for an interview on the NICENetwork or her books, and to provide nonprofit coaching.

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