## *WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING?*

Volunteering is the act of performing work without the expectation of financial compensation. It is a form of charitable giving that involves the donation of time rather than money.

***WHY SHOULD I VOLUNTEER?***

Volunteerism provides opportunities for individuals to support causes even when they do not have the financial resources to provide monetary support. The most important reason to volunteer is to make a difference in a way that is meaningful to you.

Volunteering is not always easy or fun, so it is important to choose volunteer work that supports your goals and beliefs. The primary reward will be the knowledge that you are making a difference in a practical way. While it may not change the world, it changes someone’s world.

#### Boost Your Confidence

Volunteering for worthy causes boosts your self-esteem and provides a sense of purpose and identity. It gives you an opportunity to see that the world is slightly better because you are part of it.

#### Become a Happier Person

Volunteering decreases social isolation and combats depression. It has been proven to decrease symptoms of heart disease and chronic pain. People who regularly volunteer live longer, happier lives.

One study found a direct correlation between the frequency of volunteering and happiness. Those who volunteer monthly are seven percent more likely to be “very happy” compared with those who never volunteer. This number increased to 16 percent in those who volunteer weekly.
**Expand Your Network**

Volunteering promotes [meaningful connections](https://csuglobal.edu/blog/how-volunteering-can-expand-your-network), both socially and professionally. It is especially beneficial when you have moved to a new city to start a job. As an esteemed volunteer, you can establish yourself as an important member of your community, build a social life outside of your job and create new professional connections.

#### Gain Experience

Volunteering is such a valuable experience that many high schools require it for graduation, and some colleges require it for admission. Volunteer opportunities can help you determine whether you are a good fit for a particular career path, help you experience the world from varying points of view and help you develop important job skills.

#### Improve Your Resume

Job candidates with volunteer experience have a [27 percent better chance](https://www.waldenu.edu/resource/how-strategic-volunteering-can-positively-impact-your-career) of finding employment than those without volunteer experience. Volunteer work improves your resume by preventing gaps in your work history, demonstrating your skills and showcasing your passion and work ethic. It shows your employer that you have leadership skills, initiative and connections.

#### Make a Difference

No matter how rewarding your career may be, it most likely will not afford you opportunities to make a difference in all the causes you are passionate about. You may also feel expendable or underappreciated in your career at times. Volunteers have the opportunity to see their value regularly, both in the eyes of the organization and the individuals who are helped. **Promotes Equality**

Volunteers within the same organization can be young, old, college-educated, high school students, graduates, professionals, blue-collar workers, male, female, members of the LGBTQ community and individuals from a variety of ethnic, political and religious backgrounds.

Working together as a diverse group for a common cause humanizes each person and diminishes conscious and unconscious biases. Volunteers see each other as fellow human beings rather than categories of people.

Overall, volunteers tend to be [more civic-minded](https://www.unv.org/node/1845/pdf) and inclusive. Groups that volunteer together build a collective voice to create communities that are hospitable to all.

#### Unifies the Community

Widespread volunteerism within the community increases social connectedness between people of varying backgrounds. It improves the quality and availability of community services. It raises awareness of the needs of members of the community and allows diverse groups of people representing all sectors of society to work together for solutions.
**Creates a More Compassionate Society**

Volunteering for organizations that provide services to those less fortunate [promotes empathy](https://borgenproject.org/volunteering/) by emphasizing building relationships. Human interaction helps volunteers see people in need in a more positive light as they become increasingly attuned to their real-life challenges.

Volunteers naturally develop a heightened awareness of the real issues faced by those dealing with such challenges as homelessness and food insecurity. This is a positive step towards changes that could provide real solutions.

## *WHAT TYPE OF VOLUNTEER WORK SHOULD I LOOK FOR?*

Because volunteers work for free, it is important to choose work that [enriches your life](https://source.jhu.edu/publications-and-resources/top-ten-volunteer-tips.html). Volunteer work does not have to be fun, but it should be rewarding.

Although volunteer opportunities are not always well-advertised, nearly every community has a wide variety of opportunities from which to choose. Therefore, it is okay to be selective.