

VOLUNTEER

Give the Gift of Your Time

Now that summer is fast approaching, you might want to start thinking about how you will spend all your free time. For many, volunteering is becoming a popular option and is not only a rewarding experience for the community but for the individual as well.

It is well known that there are many ways to get involved in your community. Perhaps the most obvious is to contact local hospitals and retirement homes and offer to spend time with patients and residents.

Are you interested in volunteering your time to help win the fight against cancer? The American Cancer Society offers a variety of unique ways to get involved in your community. If you visit www.cancer.org and click on the volunteer section, you can search for opportunities in your area. The American Cancer Society has a number of events that you can participate in such as Relay for Life, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer and Coaches vs. Cancer. You can also search for events in your community or find out ways to contact your legislature and voice your concerns. The more people in each community that get involved, the more effective the fight against cancer becomes.

You can also volunteer in your community through the American Red Cross, which offers a wide variety of services for volunteers. Red Cross is dedicated to providing disaster relief to communities and to helping citizens prevent, prepare and respond to emergencies. Visit www.redcross.org and learn about their volunteer opportunities. Most communities have a local Red Cross, so all you need to do is contact the representative from

your area to find out how you can get involved.

Do you like to work with kids and peers? Special Olympics' mission is focused on empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Much like other organizations, Special Olympics would not be able to provide the wide variety of activities to their athletes if not for volunteers dedicating their time, energy and support. To find out how you can get involved with Special Olympics on a local level, log on to www.SpecialOlympics.org and find a location near you.

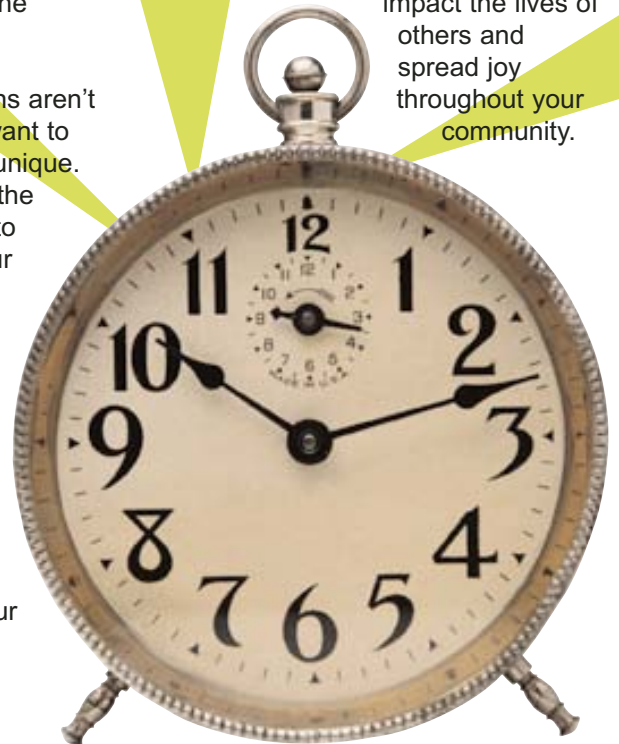
Another popular place to volunteer are animal shelters, such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) or the Humane Society, who are always in need of young volunteers to help walk and feed the animals. You can contact the SPCA at www.aspca.org and the Humane Society at www.hsus.org to learn more about protecting the welfare of animals.

However, maybe these options aren't right for you, or maybe you want to find something different and unique. If you are overwhelmed with the idea of starting from scratch to find a way to volunteer in your community, www.VolunteerMatch.org is a useful website dedicated to helping people in your situation. VolunteerMatch has done the hard work for you by building a database of volunteer opportunities. This website is straightforward and easy to access. You simply enter your

zip code and a list of volunteer opportunities in your area will appear. They have also given specific information about each organization: the amount of time they require, the number of volunteers needed, and what qualities the organization is looking for. You can also search this database by the opportunities that are offered or by the organization's name/purpose; depending on how certain you are of what you want to do. VolunteerMatch offers over 30,000 opportunities, so it should be easy to locate something that interests you.

In addition to the positive impacts volunteering has in your community, hands-on community service is always a major plus when applying to college or for a job in the medical field. If you dedicate time to others, people will recognize that as a contribution, and it can have positive impacts later in life.

Hopefully, if you are inspired by the idea of volunteering, you will act on that inspiration and undoubtedly impact the lives of others and spread joy throughout your community.



WEBSITE REVIEW