



## getting started

Each one of us has the capacity—directly or indirectly—to make a positive impact in someone's life. Finding a volunteer opportunity uniquely suited to you can be accomplished in three simple steps:



use your head

What are my natural talents, hobbies, interests?

How much time can I commit each day/week/month to helping others?

Who can I recruit to help me? Friends, family, co-workers, church folk?

What subject areas are intriguing to me?



follow your heart

What community problems concern me the most?

Which issues have had a direct impact on me, family or friends?

What news headlines are frustrating me the most?

If I could change one thing in my community, what would it be?



lend your hand

Prominently post [99 Ways to Help](#) and scratch at least one off the list each week.

Gather your friends and family and sign up for a volunteer opportunity through

[Volunteer Solutions](#). Pledge 10 hours to [VT Engage](#).

Visit your [United Way](#) or another local non-profit to offer your assistance.

Honor your commitment.

“  
Everybody  
can be great  
because  
everybody can  
serve.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



## 10 ways to find time

We each have 8,760 hours in a year, roughly 720 hours in a month, 168 hours in a week, 24 hours in a day. How many can you spare to make someone's day? It's not as hard as you think. With a little advance planning, you can work volunteering into an already busy schedule.



1. Combine family time with volunteering. Volunteering is a great way to spend quality time with the family while passing your values to your children.
2. Many companies give their employees time to volunteer during the workday. Ask about policies at your job.
3. Make a specific volunteer opportunity a weekly, monthly, or even yearly tradition so it is just as important as a birthday or holiday.
4. Join a social group that emphasizes volunteering. You'll meet new people, network and give back to the "community" all at the same time.
5. Make a list of volunteer activities that do not require a commitment and keep them handy. When you have a little free time, you can spontaneously decide to participate.
6. Seize unexpected free time like snow days as opportunities to volunteer. Shovel sidewalks of elderly neighbors or make fleece blankets for shelters.
7. Use spring cleaning as an opportunity to donate clothing and household items in good condition to charity.
8. Plan to volunteer on MLK Day and other holidays when there is no school or work.
9. Consider taking a volunteer vacation. The next time you take a few days to travel, think about using a portion of your time off to help those in need.
10. The most recent data about volunteering in America suggests that the most likely person to volunteer is a woman with a job and kids – people who are likely the busiest people in this country! People make time to

volunteer when they care about an issue.

Figure out what moves you and you'll find the time.

“  
Volunteers don't  
get paid not  
because they  
are worthless,  
but because they  
are priceless.”  
- Sherry Anderson



## volunteer tip sheets

### Be Selective

Think about what matters to you, and be selective about where you spend your time. Choosing opportunities that make you feel good while helping others builds stronger communities, and enriches your own life at the same time.



### Choose Carefully

United Way and community Volunteer Centers work with volunteers and local nonprofits to develop the best opportunities for youth, busy working adults and seniors to serve. When you work with your local Volunteer Center, you can feel comfortable about the quality and safety of the opportunity you choose and about the organization you donate your time to support.

Research causes that are important to you. Whether it's a specific health concern, education for children or a house that needs painting in your neighborhood, find out what cause is closest to your heart and make a difference.

### Consider the skills you have to offer

Would you like to write an agency's newsletter? Would you rather build a house? Or maybe you'd like to help someone learn to read? Or help a non-profit take care of their computer system? Find something you enjoy doing and enhance your skills through volunteering.

### Learn something new

Volunteering can also teach you valuable new skills that you can use in other parts of your life. For example, learning how to handle crisis calls may help you communicate better.

### Don't over-commit your schedule

Stick to a volunteering schedule that makes sense for you and leaves you time to enjoy the activity.



Printable Tip Sheets:

- [General tips for volunteering, like the ones above](#)

- [Benefits of volunteering](#)
- [Volunteering as a family](#)
- [Youth and Voluntarism](#)
- Or, you can download all of the above [combined in this file](#) (and email it to your friends!)

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## 99 ways to help

Getting involved in your community starts with the "little" things. Post this list of 99 ways to help on your refrigerator and make efforts to accomplish a few each week. A little "you" goes a long way.

1. Register to vote
2. Volunteer at your child's school
3. Offer to take an elderly neighbor to a medical appointment
4. Recycle
5. Play "spy" with a child
6. Throw your trash in a trash can
7. Write your congressman
8. Start a community garden
9. Say "Thank You"
10. Become CPR certified
11. Play kickball with neighborhood kids
12. Join the PTA
13. Call that person you've been meaning to call
14. Send a card just because
15. Adopt a pet

16. Take shorter showers to preserve water
17. Ride a bike or walk instead of driving
18. Attend your child's recitals and sports events
19. Bring your own bags to the grocery store
20. Visit sick kids at a hospital
21. Smile at people you don't know
22. Help an elderly person cross the street
23. Donate good-condition toys, clothing and household goods
24. Take a plate to your elderly neighbor
25. Write messages to soldiers overseas
26. Join your neighborhood watch group
27. Donate goods to support the troops
28. Donate blood
29. Turn everyday moments with your child into teachable moments
30. Support businesses that care about the community
31. Control your road rage
32. Write thank you notes to those that help the community and hand deliver them
33. Don't gossip
34. Let your actions promote your values
35. Ask a senior citizen to tell you about their childhood
36. Turn off the television an hour earlier than normal and read a book

37. Take a day off just to be with your family
38. Visit a nursing home and talk to someone with no visitors
39. Offer free babysitting to a single mom or family in need
40. Tape a children's book and deliver it to a sick child
41. Donate gently used books to a daycare center
42. Bring in a neighbor's mail while they are on vacation
43. Buy locally-grown fruits and vegetables
44. Agree to be an organ donor on your driver's license
45. Plant a tree
46. Plant extra rows of vegetables in your garden and share them with friends
47. Donate new shoes and socks to shelters
48. Welcome new neighbors
49. Organize a neighborhood block party or yard sale
50. Start a petition
51. Donate an instrument to a school music program
52. Read the newspaper
53. Visit your state capitol
54. Contact local media about issues of concern
55. Organize a fund raising event such as a drink stand, car wash, or yard sale and donate the proceeds to a charity
56. While traveling, write an inspirational quote in a book or magazine and purposely leave it behind for someone else to find

57. Tell a child a story about your hero
58. Create a family newsletter
59. Send your favorite teacher a thank you note
60. Pay the toll for the car behind you
61. Invite someone to dinner who would otherwise be alone
62. Introduce the 'gamer' generation to traditional activities like freeze tag, double-dutch and kickball
63. Keep some water bottles in your car and give them to workers who are in the hot sun
64. Pick flowers from your garden and leave them on a neighbor's porch
65. Offer to help someone who looks lost
66. When you ask someone "how are you?" be sure to listen to the full response
67. Let someone go ahead of you when you are driving
68. When it rains, share your umbrella with someone who doesn't have one
69. Leave an inspirational note or a joke in a child's lunchbox
70. Be courteous to telemarketers
71. Share your favorite hobby with a child
72. Take a casserole to a couple with a newborn baby
73. Forgive and really forget
74. Tip generously for good service
75. Be generous with hugs for those you love
76. Give genuine compliments
77. Leave your newspaper behind in a public place for the next person to read

78. Leave a nice note about your waiter on the back of the bill
79. Roll an elderly neighbor's trash can to the top of his/her driveway on trash pick-up day
80. Return your shopping cart after you load your groceries into the car
81. Get to work a little early and leave a piece of candy or cookie on everyone's desk
82. Print an inspirational quote or story and put it on the company bulletin board
83. Learn about a generous person in history and strive to be like him/her
84. Make breakfast in bed for someone in your household
85. Bake something as a family and take it to a neighborhood or family in need
86. Arrange a conference call for you entire family just to catch up
87. Sprinkle bird seed on the window ledge of a homebound friend
88. Be a designated driver
89. Wear a ribbon or bracelet to show support of a cause
90. Find your passion
91. Educate yourself on issues you care about
92. Play an instrument or sing for hospice patients
93. Start a compost pile
94. Donate new or gently used baby supplies
95. Add a banner ad or widget to your personal webpage to raise awareness or funds for a cause you believe in
96. Encourage your child to participate in school sports
97. Participate in a local walk/run for a cause
98. Promote worthwhile events and festivals by word of mouth

99. Create an emergency action plan for your family

“

Service to  
others is the  
rent you pay  
for your room  
here on Earth.

”

- Muhammad Ali



## United Way and volunteerism

### UNITED WAY STATS In the United States

**1.06 million**  
Direct volunteers for  
United Way

**355,000**  
Number of Day of Caring  
volunteers

United Way's origins are rooted in volunteerism. Today's United Way movement includes approximately 1,300 community-based United Way organizations. Each is independent, separately incorporated and governed by local volunteers.

United Way calls volunteers to be engaged in creating a shared vision and commitment to improving communities by focusing on the root causes of the most serious problems. It has existed for more than a century because it recognizes that its most important resource is people—those it serves and all who volunteer, work, invest and care about making a long-term change in community conditions.

To ensure volunteerism remains at the heart of United Ways' community impact work, United Way is focused on improving the mechanisms and partnerships that support and encourage volunteerism. Over half of the largest United Ways run or fund a Volunteer Center in their communities. Annually, more than one million people volunteer directly for United Way including 355,000 Day of Caring volunteers. Everyday, Volunteer Solutions-United Way's online volunteer matching application-hosts thousands of volunteer opportunities in communities across the nation.

For decades, United Way's longtime partnership with the National Football League has been used as a vehicle for getting more people engaged with their communities. And new partnerships—like the one with Cheap Tickets around volunteer vacations and with MTV around the Alternative Spring Break—are extending United Way's reach to thousands and engaging a new generation of volunteers to the work of United Way. Hundreds of young adults, including a dozen from around the world, traveled to the Gulf Coast this year to help in the rebuilding process.

Looking ahead, United Way will continue to explore ways to use technology to engage more people and has committed to connect five million volunteers as part of the Clinton Global Initiative's efforts to reduce poverty and increase economic empowerment. United Way's commitment to volunteerism also means working with policy makers at the local level, like the League of Cities, to mobilize volunteers around issues like early learning and financial stability.

United Way was founded by volunteers. It is sustained by volunteers. And it will continue to seize the power of volunteers to build a stronger America and improve people's lives.