



The Value of Volunteering: Locally, Nationally, and Abroad

A volunteer can be defined as “a person who voluntarily undertakes or expresses a willingness to undertake a service while having no legal concern in the matter” (Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary).

Simply put, volunteering is a great way for students to gain experience. If you are looking for a short-term experience, volunteering at an organization within your community may be an excellent stepping stone to something more formal in the future. Many undergraduate students who aren’t yet “qualified” for internships find that volunteering is the best step they can take early in their university careers.

Benefits of Volunteering

The benefits of volunteering include:

Exploration

Volunteering, as a first step in career development, allows you to be actively involved in an area in which you have a career interest.

Freedom of Choice

When you volunteer it’s typically up to you to decide what type of organization you volunteer with and how many hours you volunteer.

Ability to Feel Good

From a purely selfish standpoint, volunteering can allow you to feel good about yourself and your contribution to the community.

Building Your Resume

From a professional standpoint, volunteering allows you to build experience that can be added to a resume.

Adding to Your Skill Set

Volunteering allows you to strengthen your core workplace skills and attributes (e.g., communication skills, teamwork, coping with change, valuing diversity, and leadership).

Expanding Your Network

The value of networking cannot be understated, and volunteering allows you to add many names to your contact list; these contacts can be used in the future when you are searching for internships and jobs.

Drawbacks of Volunteering

The benefits of volunteering outweigh the drawbacks, but there are some things to keep in mind when pursuing volunteering opportunities:

Respect

In organizations where the majority of workers are paid employees, volunteers are sometimes used for overflow work, can be treated with little or no respect, and given a large amount of work.

Biding Your Time

A major reason students volunteer is to gain hands-on experience in a field that interests them, but many times volunteers are asked to do things (i.e. stuffing envelopes, cleaning, etc.) that are undesirable or boring; often, volunteers will be asked to do these things until they have proved they are dependable and can take on more challenging duties.

Poor Job Prospects

Some organizations see volunteers merely as “free help” and look past them when job opportunities arise.

Emotional Involvement

Volunteers need to be careful not to become overly involved with an organization at the sake of their own time and energy; if an organization is asking too much of you, or possibly abusing your good-natured intentions, you need to decide if it’s worth your time.

Lack of Appreciation

Many organizations do a wonderful job at recognizing the work of their volunteers, but often times volunteers are taken for granted; a simple “thank you for your time” is often overlooked.

Volunteer Websites

Many websites are dedicated to helping students find volunteer opportunities that meet their interests and passions. Below you will find a sampling of some of the more popular websites for volunteer listings:

Central Ohio

HandsOn Central Ohio

www.handsoncentralohio.org

Creator of the 2-1-1 information system in central Ohio, a gateway to services and volunteer opportunities (one-day, short-term, and long-term) in and around Columbus. Also, on this website, learn more about internship opportunities within the HandsOn network.

Pay It Forward

<https://payitforward.osu.edu>

The Pay It Forward site offers volunteer and service-learning opportunities, as well as a portfolio option where students can log their experiences.

Service Learning

<http://u.osu.edu/servicelearning/>

Includes a list of courses that are approved service-learning courses, giving Ohio State students an opportunity for hands-on experience and classroom learning.

Habitat for Humanity

<http://www.habitatforhumanityofohio.org/>

The Columbus chapter of Habitat for Humanity offers opportunities to become involved with projects in and around Columbus.

Life Care Alliance

www.lifecarealliance.org

Provides volunteer opportunities, many with their popular Meals on Wheels program throughout central Ohio.

Goodwill

<http://www.goodwillcolumbus.org/donate/your-time/>

Goodwill Columbus offers volunteer opportunities in dozens of different areas and industries around Columbus.

Serve Ohio

www.serveohio.org

In partnership with the Ohio Community Service Council and the local AmeriCorps office, this organization offers volunteer opportunities in the state of Ohio.

United Way of Central Ohio

<http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/take-action/volunteer/>

Providing opportunities for people to succeed in Central Ohio.

The Salvation Army

<http://easternusa.salvationarmy.org/>

The Salvation Army offers volunteer opportunities in Columbus ranging from after-school programs to their renowned Red Kettle Bell Ringer program.

COSI

<http://cosi.org/about-cosi/volunteer-and-employment>

Opportunities to volunteer at the Center of Science & Industry (COSI) are a great way for students to gain hands-on experience working with children.

Around Ohio

Cleveland.com Volunteer

<http://www.cleveland.com/volunteer/>

Offers volunteer opportunities in the northeast Ohio area, including Cleveland.

Greater Cleveland Volunteers

<http://www.greaterclevelandvolunteers.org/>

Greater Cleveland Volunteers recruits volunteers age 18+ to serve at over 100 local nonprofit organizations. Assisting people in finding the right opportunity to serve based on their interests, skills, and availability.

UC Center for Community Engagement

<https://www.uc.edu/cce/student/volunteer-opportunity.html>

Diverse list of community organizations looking to work with students on a range of volunteer projects and community based initiatives.

Give Back Cincinnati

<http://givebackcincinnati.org/>

Enhancing Cincy communities through engaging young volunteers and developing leaders by providing unique community engagement opportunities.

Volunteer Dayton

<http://www.volunteerdayton.org/>

Powered by the United Way of the Greater Dayton Area, find both short-term and long-term volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer Toledo

<http://uwtoledo.force.com/>

Powered by the United Way of Greater Toledo, find both short-term and long-term volunteer opportunities.

YMCA and JCC of Greater Toledo

<http://www.ymcatoledo.org/>

Volunteers come from all walks of life but share one trait – wanting to help others; volunteer your time to a child or teen and help ^{support} family development.

serveAkron

<http://serveakron.blogspot.com/>

This blog contains information about opportunities to volunteer at local nonprofits in Summit County and the Akron, Ohio area.

Volunteer Summit County

<http://www.uwsummit.org/community-engagement>

Powered by the United Way of Summit County, find both short-term and long-term volunteer opportunities.

National

Volunteer Match

www.volunteermatch.org

Database of over 50,000 volunteer opportunities listed from nearly 70,000 different community and nonprofit organizations.

Red Cross

www.redcross.org

Offers volunteer opportunities at local Red Cross offices as well as listings for around the country; website also includes an online volunteer orientation.

Corporation for National and Community Service

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/>

Links to the Corporation for National and Community Service, and includes information about volunteer services and roles volunteers play in shaping our country.

Points of Light Foundation

www.pointsoflight.org

The Points of Light Foundation is a powerful, integrated national organization that links interested volunteers to centers around the country and includes three business units: the HandsOn Network, MissionFish, and the Civic Incubator.

Teach For America

<https://www.teachforamerica.org>

While not necessarily volunteer work, Teach For America allows recent grads to serve for two years as a teacher in an area of the United States where teachers are needed the most; corps members have a contracted yearly salary and receive health benefits and education waivers.

Serve.gov

www.serve.gov

A website for Americans to find a way to serve within their own communities.

1-800-Volunteer

www.1-800-volunteer.org

A database for volunteer opportunities around the country; allows you to search for a volunteer center close to you.

The Nature Conservancy

www.nature.org/volunteer

Lists volunteer opportunities with The Nature Conservancy, for those interested in the environment, nature, and local conservation efforts.

HUD

<http://hud.gov/volunteering>

Lists both federal and national volunteer programs and clearinghouses.

Volunteer.gov

<https://volunteer.gov>

Is a database of volunteer opportunities for those interested in natural resources and the environment.

AmeriCorps

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps>

Each year AmeriCorps offers over 75,000 opportunities to become a corps member; AmeriCorps members receive both stipends and education awards for their service.

United Way

<http://www.unitedway.org/take-action/volunteer>

United Way improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good.

International

Students interested in international opportunities should first check with OSU's Office of International Affairs (<https://oia.osu.edu/education-abroad>) to search for programs sponsored by the University. Students should investigate all international opportunities, before applying or giving any money to a program. If you have questions about the validity of an international opportunity please contact the Arts and Sciences Career Success Office at asc-careersuccess.osu.edu. Inclusion of the following links on this document does not represent an endorsement of the organization's volunteer opportunities.

Idealist.org

www.idealists.org

Database of over 15,000 volunteer opportunities located internationally and within the United States.

IVPA

www.volunteerinternational.org

The International Volunteer Programs Association (IVPA) is an association of non-governmental organizations involved in international volunteer work and internship exchanges.

Volunteer Abroad

<http://www.goabroad.com/volunteer-abroad>

Provides both volunteer opportunities and study abroad experiences around the globe, including information on “how to get started” with your search and travel.

UNV

www.unv.org

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) program is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide.

Global Volunteers

<https://globalvolunteers.org>

A consultant to the United Nations since 1999, Global Volunteers provides experiences both internationally and nationally.

ServeNet

<https://ec.volunteernow.com/custom/1267/>

Part of Youth Service America, this site offers volunteer opportunities and profiles/links to volunteer organizations around the globe; organizes Global and National Youth Service Day.

CNVS

<https://catholicvolunteernetwork.org/>

The Catholic Network of Volunteer Service is a nonprofit organization of 200 domestic and international volunteer and lay mission programs.

Habitat for Humanity

www.habitat.org

The Habitat for Humanity website offers opportunities to become involved with projects locally and around the world.