

Retiree News

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— FOLLOW YOUR PASSION —

How Volunteering Can Enhance Your Life

When Judith Dickerson retired from Roanoke County Public Schools, she wondered about filling all that free time.

“I thought that I would never find enough to do in retirement, but I was so wrong,” she says.

She now spends her days volunteering with AARP, the Local Office on Aging, the Roanoke County Schools retiree group and a local pack-a-snack ministry.

“Because I was a Spanish and French teacher, I have also tutored a few students. This past summer, I went on a mission trip helping to rebuild a house in Puerto Rico and used my Spanish,” she says.

Help Yourself by Helping Others

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), Dickerson is one of 62.6 million Americans who volunteer regularly. They read to children at libraries, deliver food to the elderly, work with abused animals, volunteer



at food pantries and teach English as a second language. Along the way, they discover something about

volunteering. It helps others, of course, but it also helps them.

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In its research, CNCS found that seniors who volunteer experience lower rates of mortality and depression and fewer physical limitations – regardless of income, education or marital status. Other studies show that volunteering reduces the impact of chronic conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, depression and high blood pressure. For healthy people, spending time helping others keeps them active and feeling better physically and emotionally. Volunteers feel more capable and confident and have a larger social support network. Not a bad reward for a few hours a week spent helping others.

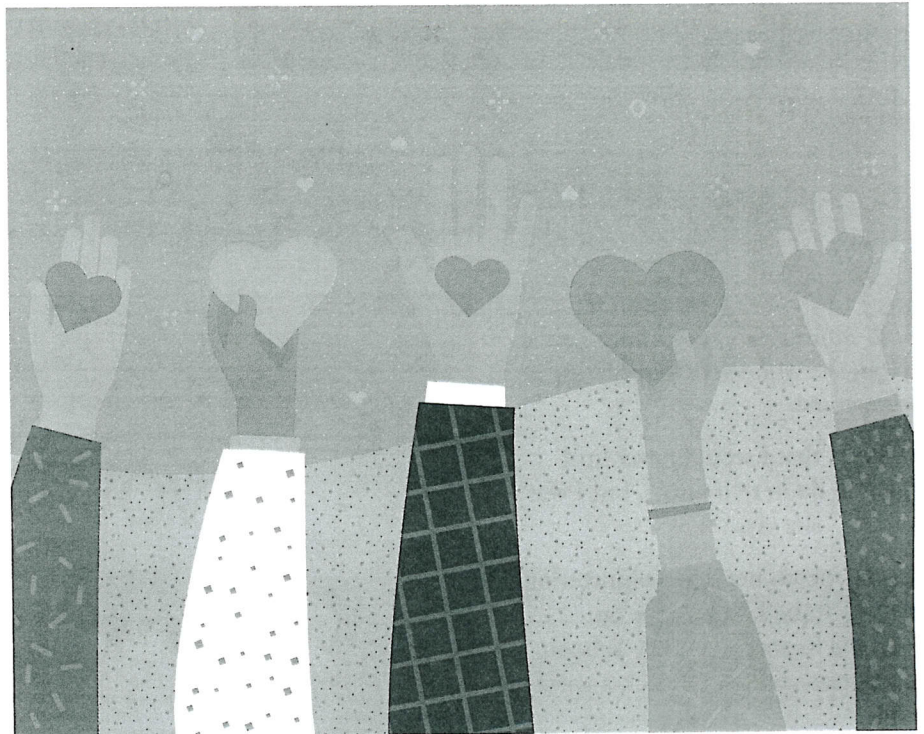
Ready to Step Up?

Start your volunteer journey by focusing on your reasons for volunteering, what you can offer and how much time you have to give. Are you keen on a particular cause, longing to follow an interest, or do you want to meet new people?

Assess your abilities. Do you have teaching experience? Web-design skills? People skills? An accounting background? Or maybe, a talent for organizing an office or a passion for details?

How much time are you willing to give? Can you teach English as a second language at night or spend Saturdays in front of a grocery store finding homes for strays? Are you willing to get up early to deliver meals?

How much physical activity can you handle? Can you tramp around trails in a park all day or be on your feet leading museum tours for an hour at a time? Are you strong enough to lift trays at a homeless shelter or run after children in an after-school program?



Volunteering Resources

It may take some research to find the right volunteer match, but websites can connect you with all types of organizations that need helping hands. With a little diligence, you're sure to find an opportunity to fit your interests and lifestyle. Here are a few websites to get you started:

- connectva.org: Events, opportunities, nonprofit directory.
- VolunteerMatch.org: More than 100,000 local and international volunteer opportunities helping with hunger, homelessness, education, animal welfare and more.
- Justserve.org: Opportunities in your community.
- volunteer.gov: Volunteer opportunities in a state or national park.
- weareteachers.com/volunteering: Guide for working with children, animals and others in need in your community.
- globalvolunteers.org: Opportunities to help children and their families around the world.
- virginiaservice.virginia.gov/volunteering: Volunteer activities throughout Virginia.

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED

Moneycrashers.com lists top volunteer jobs that require no previous experience:

1. Animal rescue shelters
2. National parks
3. Food pantries
4. Habitat for Humanity
5. Local libraries and museums