



Benefits of Volunteering

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There are many ways that people volunteer and however they do it, these volunteers are the building blocks of our strong vibrant communities. As a society we rely on people volunteering their time and talents in both the public and the nonprofit sector to make our communities “work.” Many of the services that we, or our friends and neighbors, use are either provided by volunteers or overseen by volunteers. When we think of volunteering we often only think of the volunteer opportunities that provide services to the less fortunate, but volunteering is prevalent throughout our communities. Think about the docents at museums that help facilitate learning, the individuals volunteering at the library to read to pre-K children, the members of the fire district board who ensure that the fire district has the resources that they need to keep our communities safe, and the board members and myriad of volunteers at your county fair who ensure that families have a chance to enjoy and learn from fair. Whatever way people are volunteering it is obvious that there are lots of benefits to be had by this activity. At first glance it might seem that as the volunteer you provide all of the benefits to someone else, but as you will shortly see there are numerous benefits that you as the volunteer will receive as well. What other activity can you engage in that is good for you while simultaneously providing so much benefit to your community?

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Community/Organizational Benefit

The most obvious benefit of the time you spend volunteering is to the organization whom you are giving your time to. Volunteering provides resource strapped organizations with the manpower they need to carry

Tip of the Month



It's Always About the Money

Many budgets at both the family business and family household level face choices which essentially rob Peter to pay Paul. For example, save for retirement or save for college. A recent T. Rowe Price poll of parents with kids 15 and younger found that 52% of the respondents felt saving for their kids' college was more important than saving for re-

tirement. And 53% of the respondents indicated that they'd rather pull money from their retirement savings than allow their children to take out student loans.

Financial advisers are of the opinion that robbing one's retirement account is ensuring a “welcome to Wall Mart” future for parents. Even more disheartening is the assumption some parents make that the

investment in their child's college education “is” their retirement plan.

Many personal finance experts say that it's smart for parents to prioritize retirement over college savings. That's because you need more money for retirement than you do for college tuition, and you can't borrow for retirement like you can for college.



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out their mission. Unfortunately, the world is not a perfect place and many people, animals, places and communities need our help. Non-profit organizations fill this important gap and they often need to do it with a volunteer work force. Volunteers and volunteer groups can:

- Rehabilitate wildlife and natural areas
- Teach people to read
- Bring comfort and care to the sick or dying
- Serve food to hungry people
- Build or find homes for those who need them
- Care for rescued pets and other animals
- Beautify the community
- Support youth and families



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Individual

Volunteering doesn't just benefit your community. As a volunteer you will directly benefit as well. According to the Corporation for National & Community Service “there is a significant relationship between volunteering and good health; when individuals volunteer, they not only help their community but also experience better health in later years, whether in terms of greater longevity, higher functional ability, or lower rates of depression.” (2007, pg. 13) In addition to the health benefits, you will also have a chance to gain valuable professional experience. This can be particularly valuable if you are entering the workforce or considering changing careers. Through volunteering you can also discover talents that you didn't realize you had that can change your view of your self-worth. Other benefits you might receive include:

- Feeling needed and important
- Seeing more of your community and the world
- Learning what resources are available in your community
- Making new friends
- Becoming involved in community decision making
- Increasing your social and relationship skills
- Having fun!





Family

Volunteering is also good for your family. Volunteering as a family is a great way to pass on family values to your children while spending quality time together and making a difference for others. It teaches children empathy and instills a lifelong ethic of service in them. Volunteering can help your family learn about social issues and provide a new perspective on the world. Your children might also learn new skills which can lead to them exploring what they want to do with their life. According to United Way (2015), in addition to having fun, kids also benefit in the following ways:

- Volunteering provides an opportunity for children to apply newly learned material.
- Helps children develop new social skills
- Children who volunteer are less likely to become involved in at-risk behaviors
- It teaches social responsibility
- Volunteering increases self-esteem, responsibility and an interest in learning

Business

And last but not least, volunteering is good for your business. According to the TRUiST blog, “corporate volunteer programs actually drive employee engagement.” (2013, TRUiST) This results in greater employee satisfaction, productivity and profitability. These programs also assist in recruiting and retaining younger generation of workers who often have a strong interest in being part of a socially responsible organization. Even if you are a small family run business that doesn’t hire outside employees, being involved in volunteer opportunities will increase the visibility of your business and encourage support from your community of your establishment.

As you can see there are many reasons to volunteer. Now it is up to you to get out there and do it.

References

The Health Benefits of Volunteering - A Review of Recent Research, Corporation for National & Community Service, 2007, retrieved 3/30/15 from http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf

Volunteer as a family, United Way, retrieved 3/30/15 from <http://www.unitedway.org/take-action/volunteer-as-a-family>

