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Community Volunteerism

01

Volunteerism: Health Benefits and Common Activities

Many people volunteer here and there throughout the year, usually by donating money or canned foods, preparing or serving food, or through a work activity like cleaning a park on Earth Day. But if you hope to make volunteerism a bigger priority in your life, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Monthly Activity

Volunteer in Your Community

Use a suggestion from your newsletters or come up with your own great idea and volunteer in your community! If you don't want to volunteer on your own, invite family or friends along and have fun while you make the world a better place.



Volunteerism Offers Big Health Benefits

Helping others really is the gift that keeps on giving.

Studies have shown people who volunteer have a longer lifespan, improved heart health, lower cholesterol, and reduced anxiety and depression as compared to volunteers.¹ Get active in your community to enhance your overall wellbeing!

1. https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf

2. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2009/jan/wk4/art01.htm>

3. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/volun.pdf>

Go Where You're Needed

The most common volunteer activities are:

1. Fundraising or selling items to raise money
2. Tutoring or teaching
3. Collecting, preparing or distribution food.²

If you're looking to get involved and these areas are already well-served in your community, consider other places you could focus your time instead. Mental health facilities, hospitals, recovery shelters and retirement homes are all great places for qualified volunteers to help out!

Help Isn't Just for the Holidays

72% of volunteers work with only one organization each year.³ What does this mean?

- To look at the positive, it means there are many people who do long, sustained work with a volunteer organization each year. That's great!
- On the other hand, it also reflects the one-and-done volunteers out there, those who donate time or resources once each year (likely around the holidays). If that sounds familiar, that's okay—anything helps. But try to consider organizations you could join or different ways to work volunteer time into your weekly or monthly routine.



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Volunteering in Your Community

02

6 Ways to Support Your Community

Volunteer work and supporting your local community go hand-in-hand. Here are six ways you can showcase your civic spirit:

- 1 Donate Resources:**
Donate clothes and household goods, books, food or anything else that will help those in need.
- 2 Donate Your Time:**
Walk dogs at an animal shelter, read stories or spend time at a retirement home or find another way to help others that works within your schedule.
- 3 Volunteer at a Food Pantry:**
Visit www.foodpantries.org to find a pantry near you.
- 4 Head to the YMCA:**
Here you can volunteer to help children or adults, teach a course or coach a sports team. Check your local YMCA's website to get started, or simply walk in and introduce yourself!
- 5 Care for the Homeless:**
Clothes (particularly winter gear and socks), linens and food are always needed.
- 6 Support Local Events:**
Keep an eye out for flyers, news reports or advertisements for local events, especially those that raise funds for charities. This is an opportunity to support local artists with your patronage, donate time as an usher or hang posters to help spread the word.





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Improve Your Community

03

Other Ways to Volunteer

Disaster Relief

Did you know that 93% of American Red Cross disaster workers are volunteers? If you have a flexible schedule and the skill set to assist with emergency situations, consider assisting with disaster relief. Visit www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer.html to learn more.



Online Volunteering

For people who work off hours, travel often or simply don't have the time to make it to a volunteer site on a regular basis, online volunteering might be the right option. Visit www.onlinevolunteering.org, a service of the United Nations Volunteers program, to review opportunities tailored to a number of different skill sets: Translation, teaching and training, art and design, leadership and strategy, and more.



Organize Your Own Event

Starting your own initiative sounds daunting, but it doesn't need to be an enormous project. You could approach the YMCA or a community center about teaching a class you think would be useful, offer to host a children's event at your local library or raise awareness about (and drive donations toward) a cause important to you.



Additional Resources

Visit www.foodpantries.org or www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank to find food banks near you.

Visit www.greatnonprofits.org or www.volunteermatch.org to locate charities near you.



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Recipe

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Double Almond Bites

Chewy, chocolatey, nutty goodness.

INGREDIENTS

- 16 whole natural almonds
- ½ cup unsalted almond butter
- ⅓ cup powdered sugar
- ⅓ cup high-fiber cereal, such as Fiber One Shreds, finely crushed in a baggie
- ¼ cup butterscotch chips, chopped
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat a medium-sized skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Add almonds and cook four minutes or until they begin to lightly brown. Stir frequently.
3. Remove almonds from heat and set aside on a paper towel.
4. Combine the almond butter, sugar, cereal, chips, cinnamon and vanilla in a bowl and stir until blended.
5. Shape into 16 balls about 1-inch in diameter (approximately 1 Tbsp each).
6. Place on a dinner plate dust, the balls with cocoa powder using a fine mesh sieve, then gently roll the balls to coat the remaining sides.
7. Cover and refrigerate at least two hours for peak flavor and texture. May be stored in an airtight container for up to two days.

Total Time (Cook and Prep):

2hrs 30 minutes

Servings: 8



NUTRITION INFO

(per serving)

168 calories

12 g fat

0 mg cholesterol

6 mg sodium

15 g carbohydrates

3 g fiber

4 g protein