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DO YOUR BIT

for your community



The benefits of volunteering

One of the better known benefits of volunteering is the positive impact in the community. Unpaid volunteers are often the glue that holds a community together. Volunteering allows you to connect with your community and make it a better place. Volunteering can benefit you and your family as much as the organisation you choose to help.

**SOME
REASONS TO
VOLUNTEER
ARE:**

Volunteering helps you make new friends:

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, especially if you are new to an area. It also strengthens your ties to the community and broadens your support network, helping you to meet people with common interests, engage in neighbourhood activities that are fun and fulfilling.

Volunteering can advance your career and improve your career options:

- **Volunteering can provide career experience:**

Volunteering offers you the chance to try out a new career without making a long term commitment. It is also a great way to gain experience in a new field. In some fields, you can volunteer directly with an organisation that does the kind of work you're interested in.

- **Volunteering can teach you valuable new skills:**

Just because volunteer work is unpaid does not mean the skills you learn are basic. Many volunteering opportunities provide extensive training and the activities you get involved in can teach you valuable new skills. For example, planning and implementing a major fundraising event can develop goal setting, planning and budgeting skills, and supervising and training other volunteers can help to develop people skills.

- **Boost your career options:**

A survey showed that among 200 of the UK's leading businesses

- **73% of employers** would recruit a candidate with volunteering experience over one without

- **94% of employers** believe that volunteering can add to skills

- **94% of employees** who volunteered to learn new skills had benefited either by getting their first job, improving their salary, or being promoted

Volunteering benefits your physical and mental health:

- **Volunteering increases self confidence.**
Volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self confidence, self esteem, and life satisfaction. You are doing good for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity. The better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life and future goals.
- **Volunteering combats depression.**
Reducing the risk of depression is another important benefit of volunteering. A key risk factor for depression is social isolation. Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system, which in turn protects you against stress and depression when you're going through challenging times.
- **Volunteering helps you stay physically healthy.**
Volunteering is good for your health at any age, but it's especially beneficial in older adults. Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not, even when considering factors like the health of the participants. Volunteering has also been shown to lessen symptoms of chronic pain or heart disease.

I have limited mobility - can I still volunteer?

Whether due to a lack of transportation, time constraints, a disability or other reasons, many people prefer to volunteer via phone or computer. There are many projects where you can help. Writing and graphic design lends itself to working at home and in today's digital age many organisations might also need help with email and websites.

If you think home based volunteering might be right for you, contact organisations you like and ask what some of the possibilities might be. Some volunteer organisations may require you to attend an initial training or occasional meetings. You also want to make sure that you are getting enough social contact and that the organisation is available to support you should you have questions.

Motivation and sense of achievement:

Fundamentally, volunteering is about giving your time, energy and skills freely. As a volunteer you have made a decision to help on your own accord. Volunteers gain a sense of achievement and motivation generated from the desire and enthusiasm to help. Sometimes volunteers are regarded as do-gooders and those that hold that view also assume that one person can never make a difference. It may be true that no one person can solve all the world's problems, but what you can do is make that little corner of the world where you live just that little bit better.

