

The Marvelous World of Volunteerism

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The verb volunteering was first recorded in 1755. It was derived from the noun “volunteer” because back in the 17th century the men that offered themselves for military service were called volunteer. The action of helping others is a need of mankind throughout the centuries.



An Old Chinese saying tell us: *“If you want happiness for one hour take a nap; If you want happiness for one day go fishing; If you want happiness for a lifetime help someone”.*

We find different statements referred to the value of helping others:

Goldie Hawn (1945) - American Actress.

Giving back is as good for you as it is for those you are helping, because giving gives you purpose. When you have a purposed driven life, you're a happier person.

Lev Tolstoy (1828) - Russian Author.

The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity.

Winston Churchill (1874) - Statesman and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.

Muhammad Yunus (1940) - Bangladeshi economist - Nobel Peace Prize 2006.

Making money is a happiness, making other people happy is a super-happiness!

Holy Scripture, New testament Acts 20:35.

There is more joy in giving than there is in receiving.

As you can see, persons from different countries and with different jobs share the common value of doing for others... a pure action of volunteering!

Becoming a volunteer means to decide to take some time from your everyday schedule or from the personal activities and invest to do something for others that are in need, helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference to the lives of people, animals and organizations. Nevertheless, the greatest benefits are not for the person/persons who receive volunteering actions but for the volunteer himself.

The beneficiaries of volunteer actions are usually:

- the person/persons who receive help in various ways;
- the Community in which the volunteer action takes place;
- the volunteer himself.

“Volunteering is a two-way street: It can benefit you and your family as much as the action you choose to help with dedicating your time as a volunteer helps you make new friends, expand your network, and boost your social skills.”

Why volunteer?

The first benefit of volunteering consists in the connection to others, because volunteering improves relationships among people. In fact, one of the more well-known benefits of volunteering is the impact on the community. Volunteering allows the volunteer to get to know the community and neighborhood, making social relations stronger and making the community/neighborhood a better place. Volunteering is also one of the best ways to make new friends and contacts. This is so important in a world where digital age is taking over people’s personal relations. During the volunteering, the volunteers become friends, sharing the common cause or mission, meeting new people and increase social heritage.

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, especially if you are new to an area. It strengthens your ties to the community and increases your support network, putting you in contact to people with common interests.

While some people are naturally outgoing, others are shy and have a hard time meeting new people. Volunteering gives you the opportunity to practice and develop your social skills,

increasing your social and relationship skills, since you are meeting regularly with a group of people with common interests and make stronger existing relationships. Volunteers practice in their social activities how to do team work, how to bond together how to overcome difficulties how to appreciate others, how to compensate lacks of the other volunteers as well as others compensate yours. The above capacities and personal development are life time benefits useful for all relations, with family, friends, work.

Children watch everything we do. By being a volunteer, you'll show them at firsthand how volunteering makes a difference and how good it feels to help other people and animals representing a valuable example for life.



The second benefit regards the wellbeing of your mind and body. Volunteering in fact, provides many benefits to both mental and physical health.

Volunteering helps counteract the effects of stress, anger, and anxiety. The social contact aspect of helping and working with others can have a profound effect on your overall psychological well-being. Nothing relieves stress better than a meaningful connection to another person. Volunteering combats depression by keeping you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system, which in turn protects you against depression. Volunteering improve your happiness.

By measuring hormones and brain activity, researchers have discovered that being helpful to others delivers immense pleasure. Human beings are hard-wired to give to others. The more we give, the happier we feel.

Volunteering increases self-confidence because 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. And the better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life and future goals. Volunteering provides a sense of purpose. Whatever your age or life situation, volunteering can help to

take your mind off your own worries; to keep you mentally stimulated; to add more zest to your life.

Volunteering helps you stay physically healthy. Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not. According to those studies in fact, who practice volunteering: tend to walk more; find it easier to cope with everyday tasks; are less likely to develop high blood pressure; have better thinking skills. Volunteering can also lessen symptoms of chronic pain and reduce the risk of heart disease.

If you are limited you can still be a volunteer. People with disabilities can still benefit greatly from volunteering. In fact, research has shown that adults with disabilities show improvement after volunteering. Many people choose to volunteer their time via phone or computer. In today's digital age, many organizations need help with writing, graphic design, email, and other web-based tasks. All task that you can accomplish from home allowing people with disability, people who suffer for lack of transportation or time constraints, to be volunteer.

The third benefit of volunteering is the improvement of your social skills that can lead to career advance. If you're considering a new career or if you want to improve the actual one, the volunteering can help you get experience in your area of interest and meet people in the field. It gives you the opportunity to practice important skills used in the workplace such as: teamwork, communication, problem solving, project planning, task management and organization.

The fourth benefit of volunteering is the enhancement of fun and fulfillment to your life. Volunteering could be relaxing and /or energizing. It gives you the occasion to escape your day-to-day routine as work, school and family commitment. Volunteering gives you creativity, motivation and vision that you carry over into your personal and professional life.

Once you decide that you want to be a volunteer...

How do you decide which volunteering activity you want to do?

These are some tips for getting started. First of all, think, question yourself.

- What are your main interests? What would you enjoy doing? What would make you satisfied?

- Would you like to assist/come in contact with adults, children, animals, elders...?
- Would you like to volunteer remotely from home?
- Do you prefer to volunteer alone or as part of a team?
- Do you feel more comfortable behind the scenes or do you prefer to take a more visible role?
- How much time are you willing to commit?
- What skills can you bring to a volunteer job?
- What causes are important to you?

After you have made yourself all the above questions or even more you will individuate what you would like to volunteer at.

The second step is to find an organization that matches your personal ID! Searching and asking will bring you to discover an area of your community which you never thought existed! How many needs! How many organizations! How many other people that do volunteering!

Visit several organizations try to match your personal ID characteristics and attitudes with their volunteering activities. Getting the most out of volunteering. You're donating your valuable time, so it's important that you enjoy and benefit from your volunteering.

To make sure that your volunteer position is a good fit:

- **Ask questions.** You want to make sure that the experience is right for your skills, your goals, and the time you want to spend. Sample questions for your volunteer coordinator might address your time commitment, if there's any training involved, who you will be working with, and what to do if you have questions during your experience.
- **Make sure you know what's expected.** You should be comfortable with the organization and understand the time commitment. Consider starting small so that you don't over commit yourself at first. Give yourself some flexibility to change your focus if needed

- **Don't be afraid to make a change.** Don't force yourself into a bad fit or feel compelled to stick with a volunteer role you dislike. Talk to the organization about changing your focus or look for a different organization that's a better fit.
- **If volunteering overseas, choose carefully.** Some volunteer programs abroad can cause more harm than good if they take much-needed paying jobs away from local workers. Look for volunteer opportunities with reputable organizations.
- **Enjoy yourself.** The best volunteer experiences benefit both the volunteer and the organization. If you're not enjoying yourself, ask yourself why. Is it the tasks you're performing? The people you're working with? Or are you uncomfortable simply because the situation is new and unfamiliar? Pinpointing what's bothering you can help you decide how to proceed.



About **Graziella Pazzano**, Italian and president of the Social Cooperative Fede in Azione ONLUS (<https://www.fedeinazione.it/>) and of the Music School Arti&Suoni (<https://arti-suoni-di-fede-in-azione-societa-cooperativa.business.site/?m=true>), in the suburb of Rome.

My past working experience in the profit world as a sales manager, lasted from 1989 to 2009, has brought me to a profound and life changing decision which has been to invest all that I had learned in those 20 years in the non-profit world so as to help others. I was very disappointed from all that I had seen and dealt with. Since then I refused all proposed employments to dedicate myself simply being a volunteer at first, but as time went by, while learning to organize and coordinate actions projects and programs in favor of the society and of all people around me, this fantastic world became more and more challenging, so I accepting the engagement as the vice president of a volunteering organization.

Further on, I decided to constitute a social cooperative so as to consolidate and empower all actions in favor of people. Now this is my place I wouldn't want to do nothing else in life.