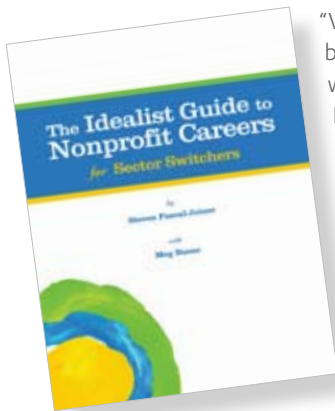


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How can I turn volunteering into a job?

Volunteering can help you focus your career search in several ways. It gives you the chance to explore different causes, see the inner workings of nonprofits, try out different roles, build experience, and make connections—including job references.

If you have a long-term relationship with a particular organization, hiring managers there might look to you when they have openings.



“Volunteers or interns are frequently the first people considered, because it’s already apparent whether they will fit well, have a good work ethic, and meet the qualifications of the job,” writes Steven Pascal-Joiner and Meg Busse in *The Idealist Guide to Nonprofit Careers for Sector Switchers*—idealist.org/en/career/guide/sectorswitcher

If you have a history of volunteering for several organizations, you can demonstrate to a potential employer—through your resume and in person—that you’re serious about nonprofit work.

But make sure you’re committed to serving.

Pascal-Joiner and Busse advise against volunteering just because you think it will lead to a job. It might not: “There are always more volunteers than available positions. Your passion for the cause and desire to learn more should be your primary motivation.”

You may start by giving your time to an issue and organization that matters to you. Think about how the experience might bring you success in the job market.

Consider these steps:

Find volunteer work in an area that moves you.

Offer your expertise with a willingness to stretch into less familiar territory.

Show your range Move among several volunteer jobs.

Make yourself indispensable Take on more responsibility.

Identify an organizational need and make a plan to tackle it.

Incorporate your volunteer work into your resume.

INCENTIVES

Volunteer rewards

The Serve America Act, passed in 2009, provides two new incentives for adults 55 and older to volunteer:

People over 55 who provide at least 350 hours of service to any accredited community organization will earn a \$1,000 Silver Scholarship, which volunteers may spend on career training or transfer to children or grandchildren.

Midlifers who participate in an AmeriCorps program for a year and earn a \$5,000 education award will now be able to use that money for their own education or transfer it to their children or grandchildren.

For more about the Serve America Act, visit: nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica



26%

About 62 million people—more than one quarter of the U.S. population—volunteered at least once between September 2007 and September 2008.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

PROFILE Michael Burke



When arthritis forced Baltimore chef Michael Burke to end his career of nearly 20 years, he signed on with Experience Corps—a national, nonprofit program that pairs volunteers with elementary school students for tutoring and mentoring.

“Kitchens and restaurants can be chaotic places,” says Burke, now in his mid-50s. “I wanted a change.”

And he hoped to feed a longstanding passion for enriching children’s lives. He had routinely given Sunday morning children’s sermons at his church. He had also built a reputation among neighborhood kids—who respectfully call him “Mr. Mike”—as someone who looks out for them.

Burke believes children need adults to guide them so the youngsters don’t turn mischievous behavior into “terrible other things.” When he sees kids acting up in the neighborhood or at church, he takes them aside to talk about manners and respect. He says he does it to show that “somebody cares and loves them.”

Experience Corps gave Burke the chance to expand his mentoring. He began helping elementary school students with reading skills. He also started volunteering in the Experience Corps office, filing papers. In his spare time, he took courses in typing, English, computer basics, and office technology.

Within about three years, the managers at Experience Corps Baltimore City—noting Burke’s commitment and skills—offered him a paying job as a program assistant. Volunteering was “the best training I could have had for a new career,” Burke says.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Make an impression

The Volunteer Center of Greater Milwaukee offers these tips on how to be a great volunteer:

- Be loyal to the mission of the organization.
- Be open to change.
- Find ways to be helpful.
- Share skills, energy, and enthusiasm.
- Communicate your needs and concerns.
- Ask questions and keep learning about the organization.
- Be realistic about the time you have to volunteer.
- Take commitment seriously. Keep appointments and schedules, or call ahead to make any necessary adjustments.



“About 12 percent to 15 percent of professional jobs are in the nonprofit sector. Almost all the people who work in those jobs began as volunteers. It’s like baseball’s farm team system. You can check out an employer, and they can check you out.”

STEVE VETTER *former Peace Corps volunteer, now CEO of Partners of the Americas*



INFORMATION

Essential resources

Check out these organizations for volunteer opportunities:

- **VolunteerMatch** is a top Internet recruiting tool for more than 65,000 nonprofits seeking volunteers. volunteermatch.org
- **The Corporation for National and Community Service**, a federal agency, runs AmeriCorps and other federally sponsored service programs. The Serve America Act authorizes 10 new Encore Fellowships—paid internships for people 55 and older—at nonprofits in each state. nationalservice.gov and serve.gov
- **boardnetUSA** helps volunteers find nonprofit boards of directors on which to serve. boardnetusa.org
- **HandsOn Network** has 250 centers nationally to help connect volunteers to meaningful service opportunities. handsonnetwork.org
- **Experience Corps** operates in more than 20 cities across the country—recruiting, training, and placing volunteers in schools. Research shows that students with Experience Corps tutors make 60 percent more progress in reading comprehension skills than students not enrolled in the program. experiencecorps.org
- **The Taproot Foundation** matches pro bono consulting teams with nonprofits. Volunteers donate three to five hours a week on a six-month, pro bono project. Offices serve San Francisco, New York City, Chicago, Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Boston. taprootfoundation.org