
Youth Service Opportunities Quick Guide



2016-2017

Welcome!

This guide will give you the “how-to’s” of volunteering. We designed it to answer some of the beginning questions you may have. You will find information on getting started, organizing group projects, beginning a service-learning program in your school, researching grant information, and options for continuing your volunteerism after high school. A complete guide to youth volunteer opportunities in Fairfax County is available on our website to download or you can search by organization or project description, click the link to find out more - <http://www.volunteerfairfax.org/individuals/just-for-youth.php>.

If you have any questions after reading this guide or need more information on volunteer opportunities and getting started, please feel free to contact us at Volunteer Fairfax. Happy volunteering!

Contact Information

Phone: 703-246-3460

Fax: 703-246-4662

Website: www.volunteerfairfax.org

Table of Contents

Getting Started	4
Helpful Hints	6
Group Projects	7
Service Learning	8
Additional Resources	10
Grant Information	11
Volunteerism After High School	12
20 Ways to Make a Difference in Your Community	13

Getting Started!

1. What is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is anyone who gives his or her time and talent by choice, does a good deed for free, helps others in the community and does real and important work.

2. Get Started Right Away!

Volunteer Coordinators are often busy people, so it may take a week or two to set up an appointment. Some positions require time for training. And sometimes it takes a while to find a position that's right for you. By delaying your search, you reduce your chances of finding an opportunity you enjoy, or maybe finding one at all. So start today!

3. Think About What You Would Like To Do.

Think about your lifestyle, beliefs and values, talents and skills, your goals and limits. Ask yourself two questions: *"What issues are important to me?"* and *"What kinds of activities would I find enjoyable?"*

If you like working in an office, would you rather do that work for an environmental group or a health clinic? If you are passionate about working with young people, would you rather be a tutor or work in an after school sports program? Also think about how far you are able to travel (can you use public transportation?) and how much time you can commit.

5. Search for Agencies that Look Interesting. Use our directory!

Look through our guide for opportunities that match your interests. Make sure the location and schedule work for you. Also, check the minimum age requirements. Some agencies are flexible about age limits, especially if you show initiative, maturity and enthusiasm or you bring an adult with you. Some agencies are not flexible. Call and ask!

6. Call the Organization.

Ask for the contact person listed or the current Volunteer Coordinator. If you have to leave a message, make sure that you include a time that you can be reached. Before calling the agency, plan what you are going to say. An example is:

“Hi, my name is _____ and I am ___ years old, I am interested in volunteering, and

I would appreciate it if you could tell me more about your program. You can call me back at my phone number _____ around (convenient time).”

7. Ask Questions.

When you speak to the Volunteer Coordinator, tell her/ him about yourself. Find out if the organization is a good match for you. Some questions you may consider asking are:

- What does your organization do?
- What type of work would I be doing as a volunteer?
- Do you provide training?
- Who will be my supervisor?
- Where are you located?
- When do you need help?
- Do I need to commit for a certain amount of time?

8. Set up an Appointment and Visit the Organization.

By seeing the agency in action, you can get a good idea of what it will be like to work there. The Volunteer Coordinator may want to interview you before you start. Try to give the best impression of who you are and what you can do for the organization.

9. Communicate Your Personal Goals to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Make sure the Volunteer Coordinator understands what you want to get out of the experience, and that he or she agrees that your needs will be met within the position. You may want to set up a "contract" stating your expectations and goals, and those of the agency. Agreeing with the volunteer coordinator on what you want to accomplish reduces the chances of a bad volunteer experience.

10. Go For It!

If after getting all this information, the organization seems to be a good match, make a commitment and start volunteering. Good luck and have fun!

Helpful Hints

Don't Procrastinate:

Nonprofit agencies are very busy and sometimes hard to contact. If you wait until the last minute, you may find it difficult to get the volunteer position you want.

Be Realistic:

Pace yourself. It is easier to start small and increase your commitment than to have to back out because you have taken on too much.

Visit the Agency:

In order to know the agency, visit and ask lots of questions. Visiting the organization can give you valuable information about its mission and the job you may be doing as a volunteer.

Be Responsible:

Remember you are representing your generation and yourself. Be on time! If you are going to be late or unable to make your appointment, call ahead. Keep in mind that the work you do as a volunteer is always important and the agency is depending on you to fulfill your commitment.

Have fun!

Remember helping out does not have to be boring. You can meet people, gain skills, and even get a recommendation for a job or school. Most of all, make it an experience you will enjoy!

Group Projects

If you are interested in volunteering on your own, you can skip this page and the information on service-learning. **If you are an adult or youth leader of a group, a teacher, or anyone who wants to organize a project for a group of young people, then read on!**

A group service project is a great way to bring a group closer together while at the same time providing a service that is difficult for one person to do alone. The benefits of the experience can be amazing. However, group projects do take a little extra planning.

Here's how to get started:

Find an Agency

Browse through the agencies and locate the group friendly opportunities. If there is nothing that catches your eye, if the one agency that interests you is not listed as group-friendly or the minimum age doesn't match the age of your group participants, call them anyway. **Never be afraid to ask an agency if they need help!**

Put Together a Project

Contact the agency and let them know you were referred by Volunteer Fairfax. Tell them your group is interested in a group project. Ask them if they have, or could design, a special project for your group. It is also great to suggest projects. Agencies love new ideas! Be ready to discuss details such as when your group is available, how many people will be on hand, how many adults, the ages of the participants and how long you will be willing to work.

Keep the Agency's Needs in Mind!

Keep in mind the agency's accommodations and needs. Don't push anything that they may not be ready for. Remember, your group wants to help them, but only if they want the help.

Service Learning

Service Learning is a teaching strategy that links academic curriculum with service to the community. Community service and service learning have many similarities. Both emphasize civic responsibility, meeting community needs, and creating strong collaborations in the community. Both value personal, social, career and ethical growth of students. **The difference is that service learning integrates classroom teaching with hands-on service experiences that enhance and deepen student learning.**

Service Learning...

- Is a method whereby students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of a community;
- Is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program and with the community;
- Helps foster civic responsibility;
- Is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled;
- Provides structured time for the students and participants to reflect on the service experience.¹

Why Use Service Learning?

Students involved in service learning receive a variety of academic and social benefits. Students will. . .

- Understand the relevance of what is being taught in school and apply learning and skills to the outside world.
- Remember and use the content information and skills that they learned in class through service learning.
- Have an improved understanding of their role as citizens in a democratic society.
- Understand that every community has needs that are often unmet and learn how to identify those needs.
- Develop an ethic of providing service to others and to their community.
- Understand that working with other people as a team is often an effective way of addressing issues and solving community problems.
- Reflect on their service experiences and on the effect of those experiences on the lives of people they served or on their own lives.²

¹ The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993.

Examples of Service-Learning:

Service learning is a teaching strategy that can work for all students, in all subject areas and at all grade levels. Here are some examples of service-learning projects:

In elementary school: 3rd grade students partner with a nearby senior care facility. Students study letter writing. At the facility, students take dictation of letters from seniors, return to their classroom, and prepare the letter to be sent with appropriate form, spelling, and grammar. The seniors sign the letters and the students mail them.

In middle school: 7th grade science students design, create and maintain a garden located in a deserted lot in the back of the school. The garden, consisting of native California plants and ecosystems, is used as a focal point for the study of geology, ecology, and agriculture.

In high school: Students in an American Democracy class volunteer at public or community based agencies, after brainstorming issues related to the theme of poverty. The teacher assigns readings related to the theme. Each student maintains a journal with entries relating their experiences to classroom learning.

² Report of the State Superintendent's Service Learning Task Force, California Department of Education, 1999.

Additional Resources

Online Resources

Volunteer Facts and Statistics

Youth Service America – www.ysa.org

Generation On - Kids Care - www.kidscare.org

Service Learning

Generator School Network – <https://gsn.nylc.org/>

Prudential - www.prudential.com/community

National Youth Leadership Council - www.nylc.org

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer Fairfax - www.volunteerfairfax.org

Volunteer Match - www.volunteermatch.org

Youth Service Opportunities Project - www.ysop.org

Youth Activism/Resources

Do Something - www.dosomething.org

The Corporation for National and Community Service - www.cns.gov

Youth In Action – www.youthinactionri.org

Youth as Resources - www.yar.org

Youth Venture - www.youthventure.org

Grant Information

Win an Award!

Throughout Northern Virginia, hundreds of volunteers lend their time, talent, and resources with boundless generosity, spirit, and enthusiasm. Many companies give back to recognize and reward the vital work done by volunteers. Check out these grants sponsored by businesses and/or organizations:

1. The Congressional Award

The Congressional Award is the U.S. Congress' award for young Americans. The program is open to all 4 to 23 year olds. Participants earn bronze, silver and gold Congressional Awards and bronze, silver and gold Congressional Award medals. Each level involves setting goals in four program areas; Volunteer Public Service, Personal Development, Physical Fitness and Expedition/Exploration. For further information, please visit <http://www.congressionalaward.org>.

2. Daily Points of Light Award

The Daily Points of Light Awards are designed to honor those who have made a commitment to connect Americans through service to help meet critical needs in their communities. Any individual, organization, group, family, business or labor union actively engaged in voluntary service may apply. To find out more, contact the Points of Light Foundation, www.pointsoflight.org or to receive a nomination form, please call 202-729-8184 or email awards@pointsoflight.org.

3. Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

The Prudential Spirit of Community awards recognize students in middle and high school who have demonstrated exemplary community service. The awards program is sponsored by Prudential in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Award winners are then selected at the local, state and national levels.

4. Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards

The Fairfax County Volunteer Service Awards were established in 1993 and serve as a community-wide celebration of volunteerism. Nominations open in January for the event that occurs in April. Competitive categories include Family, Youth Individual and Youth Group and a non-competitive benchmark award is available who have served 100 hours and more. More information can be found at www.volunteerfairfax.org.

Volunteerism after High School

Below are options for youth to research in an effort to continue volunteer service after high school.

AmeriCorps: www.americorps.gov

AmeriCorps is an opportunity to make a big difference in your life and in the lives of those around you. It's a chance to apply your skills and ideals toward helping others and meeting critical needs in the community. Each year, AmeriCorps offers 75,000 opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national nonprofit groups. Whether your service makes a community safer, gives a child a second chance, or helps protect the environment, you'll be getting things done through AmeriCorps! You must be at least 17 years old, although some service opportunities require you to be at least 18. For one of our programs, the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), members must be between 18 and 24 years old, but for most there are no upper age limits.

City Year: www.cityyear.org

City Year unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service, giving them skills and opportunities to change the world. As tutors, mentors and role models, these diverse young leaders help children stay in school and on track, and transform schools and communities across the United States, as well as through international affiliates in Johannesburg, South Africa and London, England. Just as important, during their year of service, corps members develop civic leadership skills they can use throughout a lifetime of community service. To participate, you must be between the ages of 17 and 24, be a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident alien, and be a high school graduate or GED recipient or agree to work toward high school equivalency while serving at City Year. A full term of service with City Year is 10 months.

Amigos de las Americas: www.amigosinternational.org

With AMIGOS, you will have the chance to live with one or two other Volunteers in a small community in Latin America. Our program is the perfect way to improve your Spanish fluency while gaining experiences that will set you apart from your peers and give you the skills necessary to accomplish your school and career goals. AMIGOS puts cultural sensitivity, youth action, and safety first when developing volunteer opportunities with our partner agencies. This approach includes placing volunteers in communities in groups of 2-3, family home stays, an elaborate system for supervision and support, and a tried and true safety and security system. The minimum age for participation in an AMIGOS Latin American project is 16 years of age on or before the following September 1, provided that the individual has completed his or her sophomore year of high school.

20 Ways to Make a Difference in Your Community

Courtesy of Youth Service America

Young people are serving their communities at record numbers. Last year, 13 million teens gave 2.4 billion hours of service back to their communities. If you want to help your community, here are some ideas for how you can make a difference.

1. Help teach a younger child to read.
2. Help cook and/or serve a meal at a homeless shelter.
3. Gather clothing from your neighbors and donate it to a local shelter.
4. Make "I Care" kits with combs, toothbrushes, shampoo, etc. for the homeless.
5. Pack and hand out food at a local food bank.
6. Adopt a "grandfriend" and write them letters and visit them.
7. Visit senior citizens at a nursing home.
8. Rake leaves, shovel snow, clean gutters, or wash windows for a senior citizen.
9. Pick up groceries or medicine for an elderly person.
10. Go for a walk with a senior citizen in your community.
11. Deliver meals to homebound individuals.
12. Hold an afternoon dance for your local nursing home.
13. Teach a senior friend how to use a computer and the Internet.
14. Paint a mural over graffiti.
15. Invite local police officers to present a drug awareness or safety presentation.
16. Tutor a student that needs help learning English or some other subject.
17. Organize a canned goods drive.
18. Clean up a vacant lot or park.
19. Contact your local volunteer center for opportunities to serve.
20. Plant flowers in public areas that could use some color.