



Volunteer!

A Toolkit for Volunteers
with Disabilities



Introduction

Volunteering is a way to make a valuable contribution to the community. Everyone should be able to have meaningful volunteer experiences, and to be recognized for their contributions. Volunteering can be a way for people of all abilities to develop their skills. Volunteering can sometimes lead to employment.

This toolkit can help you access meaningful volunteer opportunities through Volunteer Fairfax.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering and for wanting to make a difference in our community by giving back to others.

Volunteering with Volunteer Fairfax

The mission of Volunteer Fairfax is to mobilize people and resources to meet regional community needs. Volunteer Fairfax strengthens the capacity of local nonprofits, connects for-profit resources to community need, supports government programs, and matches volunteers to meaningful service.

In 2021, more than 9,000 individuals contributed more than 30,000 volunteer hours through Volunteer Fairfax. These volunteers served more than 600 nonprofits & charitable organizations.

Volunteer Fairfax is committed to equity in its programs and services. This supports Fairfax County's One Fairfax policy — a declaration that all residents deserve an equitable opportunity to succeed — regardless of their race, color, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, disability, income or where they live.

Finding an Opportunity that is a Good Fit

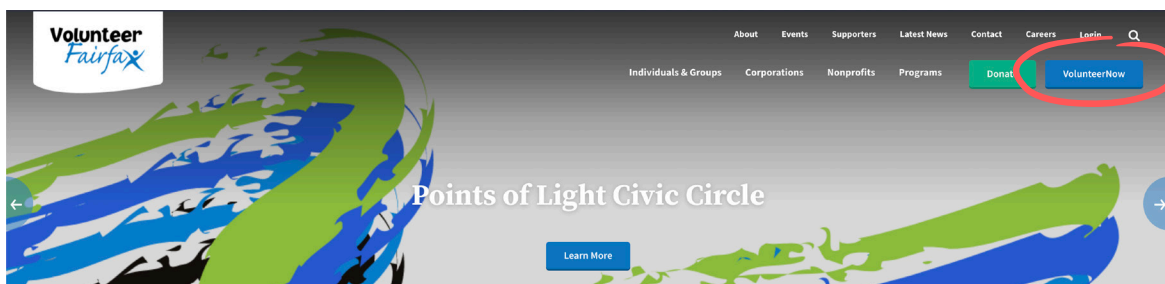
Think about what you are interested in, the skills you bring to the project, the times you are available, locations that would work for you, etc. Search available opportunities in Volunteer Fairfax's volunteer management system VolunteerNow.

Organizations that have completed training on Inclusion are identified with the Inclusive volunteering icon. If you find an opportunity that does not have the Inclusive icon, use the strategies in this toolkit to request any accommodations you may need.

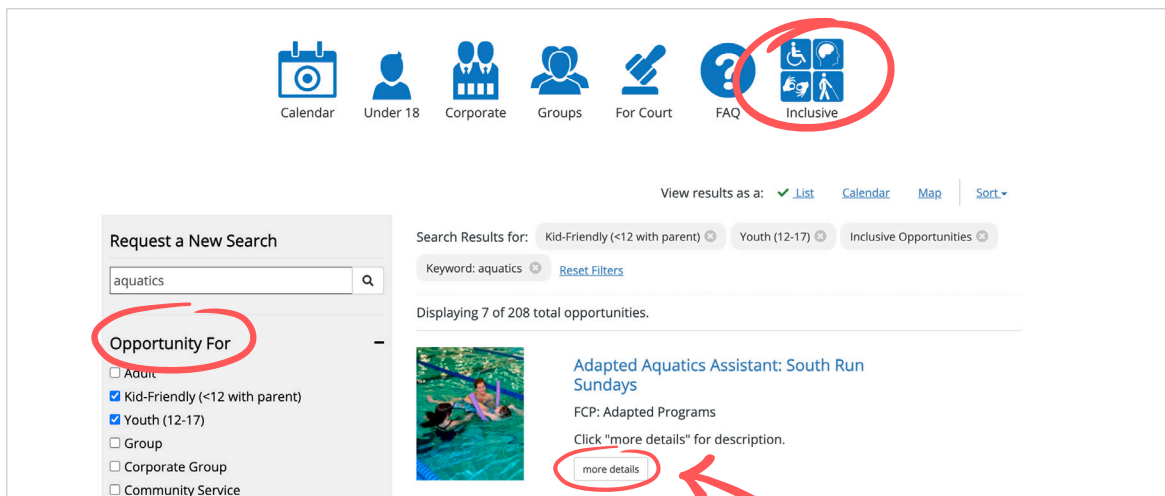
- 1 Go to www.volunteerfairfax.org and click on **"VolunteerNow"**.
- 2 Select the **"Inclusive"** volunteer icon on the toolbar or use the check box under **"Opportunity For"** to find opportunities from organizations who have completed the "Inclusive Volunteering" training offered by Volunteer Fairfax.
- 3 If you don't find an opportunity using the Inclusive icon search, you are welcome to inquire about any volunteer opportunity that interests you by reaching out to the volunteer manager.
- 4 Click **"More Details"** to view detailed information about the volunteer opportunity.
- 5 Review the opportunity description, making notes of questions or accommodations you might need. Reach out directly to the contact person listed in the opportunity to confirm if your accommodation(s) can be honored for this activity.
- 6 Once you have heard back from the organization's contact and confirmed that this position works for you, **"Sign Up"** for the opportunity.
- 7 Login to VolunteerNow with your user ID and password to sign up for the opportunity. First time volunteers will need to first **"Register"** and create a user profile and password.

Navigating the Website

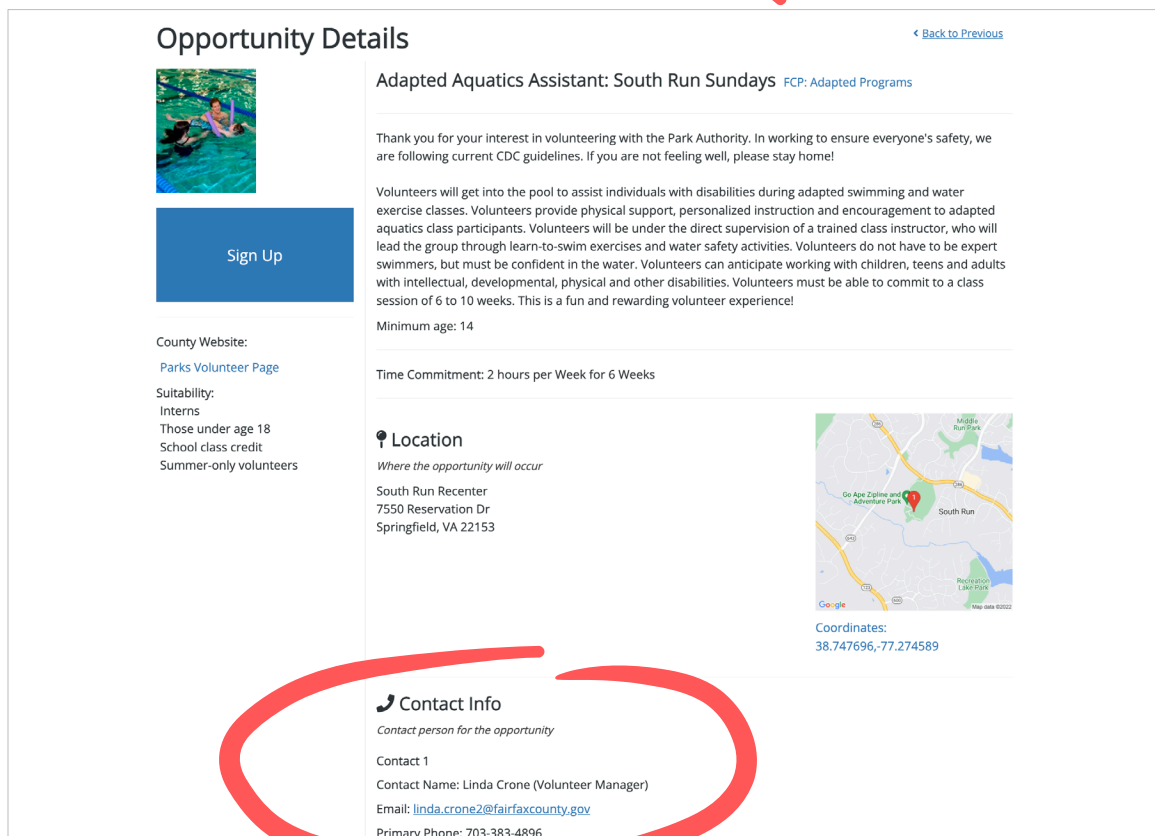
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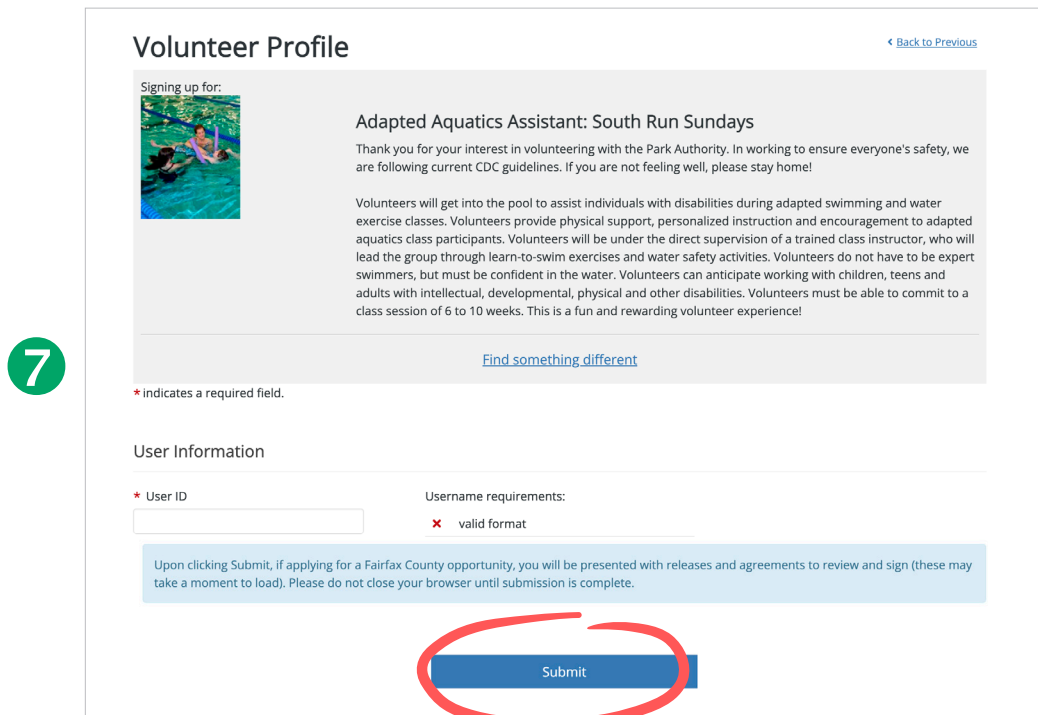
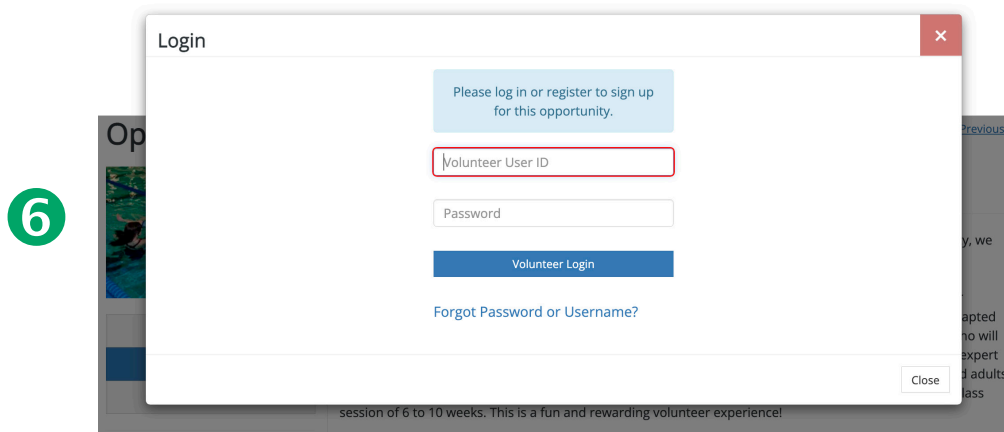
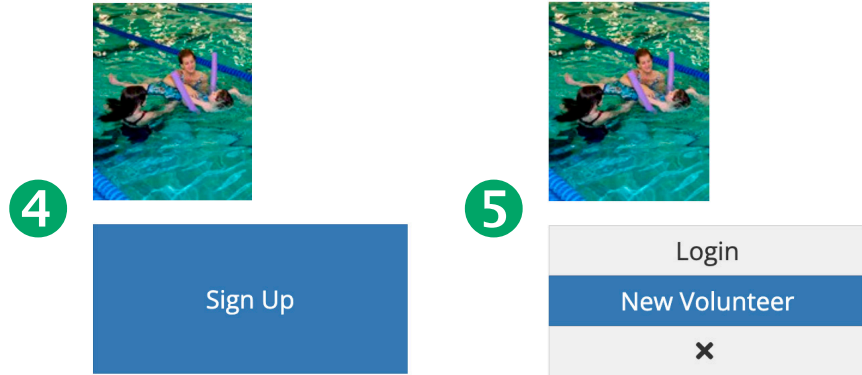
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Navigating the Website



Tips for Thriving in Your New Volunteer Position

- Before your first day, make sure you know the day(s) and time(s) you are expected to work, appropriate clothing for your assignment, and who to report to when you arrive (the day-of contact).
- Make sure you have your day-of contact's phone number and email address and they have yours. You will need to contact them if you will be late or cannot work.
- Keep up communication with your day-of contact. Talk about what you might need to be as successful as possible in your work.
- Ask for feedback on how you are doing.
- Ask for clarification on tasks if needed.
- If a task is especially challenging, talk with your day-of contact about ways to adapt the task or situation that would help, or possible alternative tasks.
- Keep notes of what you are doing in your volunteer position— your tasks, the skills used or learned — and details about the organization and contacts. This information can be useful in considering and looking for future opportunities and for adding to your resume.

Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a law that protects people with disabilities from discrimination. People with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else. While ADA does not specifically address volunteering, many organizations are familiar with the law and requirements such as reasonable accommodations.

Sometimes a small change can make a big difference in creating a successful opportunity. Do not hesitate to ask for accommodations that might allow you to be successful.

What are some examples of reasonable accommodation?

Because of their disability, some people may benefit from accommodations such as

- Using checklists or charts to remember specific steps to complete
- Being able to sit instead of standing while working or use an adjustable table or desk
- Being able to take frequent breaks during a lengthy activity

Examples of accommodations for volunteers

- Keysha volunteers at a local animal shelter. She loves working with the animals and the staff think she does a great job and are very appreciative of her help. Related to her disability, she is very sensitive to loud noises and at times the animals can be very loud, making it difficult for her to cope. She requested that she be able to wear noisecanceling headphones when needed.
- Mike volunteers with a local food bank. While he really enjoys the work, he was having difficulty remembering all the instructions for organizing and packing materials. The support person accompanying Mike recognized the challenge and worked with the supervisor to develop a set of simplified written instructions and a color-coded system to help him more independently carry out the job duties.
- Maria volunteers as greeter at a local non-profit. One part of her responsibility typically requires standing for long periods. Her disability makes it difficult and uncomfortable for her to stand for any length of time. She worked with her day-of contact to identify and agree to a way she could sit on a stool and still do the job effectively.

More on accommodations: You can learn more and search for information on many accommodations for a broad range of disabilities on the Job Accommodation Network, [A to Z of Accommodations and Disabilities](#).

Resources

- [An Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- [Etiquette: Interacting with People with Disabilities](#)
- [JAN: Job Accommodation Network](#)
(Includes a searchable database of disabilities and accommodations)
- [Volunteers and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

Thank you again for your interest in volunteering and wanting to make a difference in our community by giving back to others.





This Toolkit was developed by the Disability Inclusion in Volunteering Taskforce (DIV). The goals of the DIV are to discover, develop, unlock, plan, and promote volunteer activities for persons with disabilities in Fairfax County and the Northern Virginia region.

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