Volunteering

Are you looking for educational opportunities outside the classroom? Do you enjoy meeting new people and working as a team to accomplish goals? Would you like an opportunity to do something to advance your career while also helping others?

Volunteer opportunities have many benefits. Volunteering is a great way to meet people with similar interests and form bonds that can assist you in furthering your career and education goals. Volunteering time for community projects has become a requirement for graduation at many colleges and universities, and many companies look to hire new employees who are actively involved in their communities. With this in mind, you will not only help yourself through volunteering, but make a difference in your community as well.

Volunteer opportunities are available locally, nationally, and internationally. Local volunteers might deliver meals, work at a shelter, or help senior citizens with landscape activities. National opportunities include voter registration, disaster relief, and teaching in remote areas. International volunteers include engineers and health professionals.

If you are interested in volunteering, talk to a school counselor or contact a volunteer agency.

Frequently Asked Questions
What kinds of organizations need volunteers?
Great question! Volunteers are needed at a variety of different nonprofit and public organizations. Organizations that often need and rely on volunteers include food banks, hospitals, churches, museums, theaters, foundations, homeless shelters, public and private schools, soup kitchens, national and state parks, youth development organizations, and assisted living homes.

How do I decide where to volunteer?
The answer to this question depends on what you are interested in, and the types of opportunities available in your community. Many people use community service as a way to build valuable skills to further a career or enhance educational opportunities. You might want to volunteer at organizations that are doing service projects related to the types of skills you are looking to gain. For instance, if you want to be a grant writer, you can volunteer with an organization by offering to write one for them. If you are going to school and majoring in pre-law or criminal justice, you might want to try volunteering at your local Legal Aid office.

Who qualifies to be a volunteer?
Volunteers come from all walks of life, and almost anyone can volunteer their time. There are opportunities for children, adults and seniors. If you have special needs that must be addressed in order to volunteer (like accessibility or sight issues), be sure to tell the organization you are interested in assisting. They will let you know if they unable to accommodate you.

Can my entire office/family/school/organization work on a service project together?
Yes. Many organizations need large groups to assist with things like cleaning highways and parks, or disaster relief. Volunteering as a group is a great way to get to know your peers and family better. All you need to do is contact the organization you want to assist and ask if they have group opportunities.

I work or go to school full-time; do I have time to participate in community service or volunteer?
Yes. Many community service and volunteer opportunities are in the evenings or on the weekends. Additionally, there are many projects that only need you to donate your time for a couple of hours or just one full day. Many organizations that rely on volunteers take great pains to make the experience as easy and convenient for you as possible.
Can I earn money as a volunteer?
No. In almost all situations, when you volunteer you are donating your time. This is why it is important to find projects and organizations that you are interested in, and that can teach you skills or provide you with opportunities that you would not have access to otherwise. The one exception may be volunteer work overseas where your living expenses during your stay may be covered.

Can I participate in service projects and volunteer just for fun?
Of course you can! People volunteer for numerous reasons, and this includes using it as an opportunity to meet new people and have a good time.

**Volunteer Tips**
When you volunteer you are not only representing the volunteer organization, but yourself, your school, and even your employer. Volunteer opportunities are a great way to meet people who can help your future, and a great way to make friends. Follow these tips to ensure that you are getting the most out of your experience:

*Be on time*
*Be considerate and reliable*
*Abide by the policies of the organization*
*Treat other volunteers with respect and tolerance*

Also, be sure to know the specifics before you go! You may want to ask the following questions before you are scheduled to volunteer:

*What time does your volunteer shift begin and end?*
*With whom should you check in and out?*
*Where should you be and what should you be doing?*
*What is the appropriate dress?*
*To whom should you refer questions/problems that you are not able to answer/correct?*
*Who is your emergency contact and where can they be reached quickly?*

**Resources**
Organizations that will assist you in volunteering in your local community:
http://www.americorps.org
http://www.handsonatlanta.org
http://www.handsonnetwork.org
http://www.idealist.org
http://www.redcross.org
http://www.servenet.org
http://www.volunteermatch.org
http://www.volunteersolutions.org/

Organizations that will assist you in finding volunteer opportunities around the world:
http://geekcorps.org
http://www.peacecorps.gov
http://www.volunteerabroad.com
http://www.volunteer.org.nz
http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/