

Stay Active Through Volunteering



"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands—one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."

Audrey Hepburn

Volunteerism has been an American value for as long as the country has existed. By enabling individuals of all ages to contribute their time and skills to support others, volunteering benefits both communities and the volunteers themselves. In fact, research has shown that volunteering just a few hours a week can lead to better health in older adults. Volunteering leads to:

- Reduction in depression
- Social connections
- Lessening of chronic pain and stress
- Improved mental function

As Americans continue to live longer lives, many are seeking new ways to give back to their communities while finding meaning and purpose. Volunteering enables older adults to accomplish both of these goals.

Getting Started

Older adults can engage in volunteer opportunities in their communities at a variety of organizations. Area Agencies on Aging can connect older adults to meaningful volunteer opportunities and programs in their communities.

The possibilities for volunteering are endless. Volunteers can deliver home-delivered meals to seniors, provide transportation to older adults who can no longer drive, read to young children at local schools, mentor at-risk teens, serve as a docent at a local museum, serve on a local government advisory board—or something entirely different.

Success Story: Calvin

Calvin, 80, joined the Loudoun County Volunteer Program after his wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Prior to volunteering, he felt overwhelmed by the challenges of watching his wife's condition deteriorate and serving as her primary caregiver. "During my darkest times, I wondered why this was happening to me and whether I would be able to get through it. Now, as a seasoned volunteer with 15 years under my belt, I understand that I was being tested and prepared for the most important role of my life—helping others. Volunteering gave me a reason to get up in the morning and stimulated my brain as I learned about issues that were completely unfamiliar to me. Currently, I provide older adults with tax assistance and Medicare education support and I can't wait to learn more so I can do even more".

Resources

- Use the Eldercare Locator (eldercare.acl.gov) to find a volunteer opportunity through a local Area Agency on Aging.
- Volunteer Match (volunteermatch.org) connects people of all ages with a range of with opportunities.
- The America's Natural and Cultural Resources Volunteer Portal (volunteer.gov) connects individuals to volunteer opportunities in local parks and cultural sites.
- AARP's Tutoring and Literacy Program (aarp.org/experience-corps) provides connections to opportunities that help children and adults learn to read.
- The Corporation for National and Community Service provides a variety of opportunities for people of all ages to get involved in a range of service programs - nationalservice.gov/serve/search
- The Red Cross (redcross.org) has volunteer programs that help individuals during natural disasters.
- The United Way (unitedway.org/get-involved/volunteer) connects individuals to local community organizations.

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