

Stay Active Through Volunteering

"What is the essence of life? To serve others and to do good."— Aristotle

Giving back to your community through volunteering is a traditional American value, dating back to our nation's founding. By contributing time and skills to support others, volunteering benefits both communities and the volunteers themselves. In fact, research shows volunteering just a few hours a week can lead to better health for older adults, by reducing feelings of depression, increasing social connections and adding to a sense of purpose.ⁱ

If you're looking for new ways to give back to your community while finding meaning and purpose, volunteering can help you accomplish both of these goals.

Getting Started

Find meaningful volunteer opportunities and programs in your community through a variety of organizations, including Area Agencies on Aging. As a volunteer, you can deliver home-delivered meals or provide transportation to older adults who can no longer drive, read to young children at local schools, mentor youth, serve as a docent at a local museum, serve on a local government advisory board—or something entirely different! Even better—you can find volunteer opportunities that take place in person or virtually.

Success Story: Calvin

Calvin, 84, began volunteering with the Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging after his wife's diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. Prior



to volunteering, he felt overwhelmed by the challenges of serving as her primary caregiver. "During my darkest times, I wondered whether I would be able to get through it. Now, as a seasoned volunteer with 19 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 [through my county's Area Agency on Aging health insurance counseling program] and I can't wait to learn more so I can do even more."

ⁱ Terry Y. Lum and Elizabeth Lightfoot, *The Effects of Volunteering on the Physical and Mental Health of Older People*, Research on Aging, January 2005, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0164027504271349>.

Calvin remained an active volunteer during the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, he and other health insurance counseling volunteers received cell phones and laptops to ensure that they could continue to serve as volunteers, virtually—and many volunteer programs around the country did the same.

Resources

To find volunteer opportunities, including virtual volunteer opportunities, connect with organizations in your community or visit the online resources below.

- Use the Eldercare Locator (eldercare.acl.gov; 1 (800) 677-1116) to find a volunteer opportunity through a local Area Agency on Aging or other organization.
- AmeriCorps Seniors (americorps.gov/serve/americorps-seniors) provides a variety of opportunities for older adults to get involved in a range of service programs.
- Volunteer Match (volunteermatch.org) connects people of all ages with a range of opportunities.
- Volunteer.gov (www.volunteer.gov) connects individuals to volunteer opportunities that support causes managed by federal agencies.
- AARP's Create the Good ([createthegood.aarp.org/volunteer-search](https://aarp.org/volunteer-search)) provides connections to volunteer opportunities across the country.
- The Red Cross (www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer.html) has a range of volunteer opportunities to support the Red Cross mission to help individuals during emergencies, including remote opportunities.
- The United Way (www.unitedway.org/get-involved/volunteer) connects individuals to local community organizations.
- Points of Light Engage (engage.pointsoflight.org) connects potential volunteers to volunteer opportunities through its digital volunteer network.

In your community, contact:

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