



Altenheim Resource Services

Timely Resources DEEPER DIVE



CELEBRATE SERVICE! with Volunteer Editor: Jeanette Wojcik
April 2025

Since 1974 we have been celebrating the work of volunteers throughout our nation. This year's theme is Celebrate Service. It gives us an opportunity to shine light on people and the causes that inspire us to serve. This month we take a Deeper Dive into volunteerism and how it benefits our communities and those who volunteer.

Volunteerism is basically the act of contributing free labor to a nonprofit organization. According to the [Independent Sector](#), every hour of volunteerism is valued at \$33.49. (This is for 2023. The 2024 value will be announced later this month.) Approximately one-third of the nonprofit workforce is volunteer. [Brian Byard](#) recently wrote in a blog for the Independent Sector, "Service, more than anything else, has the power to unite people — respecting differences and transcending divisions for the sake of others and the greater good." He points out that the spirit of volunteer service has been how this nation has evolved and prospered.

Nonprofit organizations often struggle to meet the demands of their mission and to serve their community because of limited budgets. By using the skills of volunteers, a nonprofit can build capacity and maximize resources. Volunteers can perform a variety of functions from answering phones to collecting trash along the roadside. Some volunteers make a long-term commitment to an organization and some prefer to offer short-term, limited service. Volunteers typically help with fund raising projects, program delivery, advocacy, outreach, and event coordination. There's something for everyone who wants to volunteer. If you are a person with [strong leadership or technical skills](#), you may want to consider offering your services to an organization. Strategic leadership volunteering includes providing technical skills or professional services for free. Leadership volunteering includes board and committee members who help to establish policy and guide organizations to achieve the mission.

Becoming a volunteer is relatively easy. The first step is to find a nonprofit organization with a mission that speaks to your heart. If you don't know much about the nonprofits in your community you could check with your local United Way, Chamber of Commerce or Community Foundation. The next step is to contact the organization. Find out what kind of help the organization gets from volunteers. Is there something that you can do? Ask about volunteer training. An organization that values its volunteers provides training and resources for the volunteer to be successful. Ask the organization to clearly define your roles, responsibilities and expectations. And, be sure to give feedback to the organization on your experiences so they can improve the volunteer experience for you and for others.

If you become a volunteer, what's in it for you? The [Mayo Clinic](#) reports that volunteers age 60 and older experience benefits in their physical and mental health. Volunteering can reduce stress and increase positive feelings. It provides meaning in life and a sense of appreciation. These in turn result in decreased risks of heart disease, strokes, depression and general illness. Volunteering can also increase social interaction and build a support system based on common interests.

Martin Luther King famously said, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve." He went on to say, "You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. **You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love, and you can be that servant.**" Celebrate that service today and every day!