



HOW TO BE AN IMPACTFUL VOLUNTEER



9 HABITS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
WHEN GIVING BACK

CARING 

See more about The Salvation Army's Fight for Good and how you can join at caringmagazine.org.



“

It's important to volunteer all year, but especially throughout the holidays because it's always a time of extra need. I've always found that if I can make a difference in one person's life, that's powerful.

”

—SHARON SIGNORELLI,
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



To volunteer is simply to *do something*—freely giving of your time and skills.

Have you ever found yourself wanting to volunteer, but unsure of what to do or how to go about it?

HERE'S THE KEY: YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT IN THE FIGHT FOR GOOD WITH WHATEVER TIME AND SKILLS YOU HAVE.

It can be as simple as leaving an encouraging Post-It note on a bathroom mirror next time you're out to brighten someone's day with an unexpected confidence-booster.

You could write the national human trafficking hotline (888-373-7888) on clothing tags before you donate them to your local thrift store.

You could learn how to spot online bullying and anonymously flag hateful content on a given platform.

You could come alongside The Salvation Army nearest you, helping pack and distribute boxes of food for families in crisis.

You could host a neighborhood drive for hygiene items, non-perishable food, toys or blankets and give them to The Salvation Army to help those in need in your community.

You could spend an afternoon with your kids writing cards of encouragement for The Salvation Army to distribute to those living in a shelter, addictions rehabilitation center or low-income senior housing letting residents know someone is thinking of them.

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*The Salvation Army, to me,
meets pretty much any need
the community brings to it.
The Salvation Army is there
as a resource.*



—DAVID ADAMS,
PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA



WHATEVER YOUR INTEREST, THERE IS A *YOU-SIZED* NEED FOR GOODNESS IN THE WORLD.

Whether it's through opportunities with The Salvation Army or elsewhere, your gifts are needed. You are needed.

If you choose to cultivate these nine habits of impactful volunteers, you will make a difference in the lives of others. When you strive to do good, you help build a safer world for all and give others a lasting display of the love behind your beliefs.

1. MAKE GIVING TIME A REGULAR PRACTICE.

Of all the habits, consistently showing up is the most vital. Make giving your time part of your routine, knowing that takes conscious effort. Volunteering can slip through the cracks when life is busy. When you change your perspective and see how much you can offer the world through service, you can challenge yourself to make it a top priority. Make an effort to plug volunteering into your calendar. Don't wait for opportunities to fall into your lap; be proactive and plan ahead.

2. SHOW INTEREST IN THE CAUSE.

You don't always find your passion in the first place you volunteer, but over time, you can discover what causes you to come alive. Try out a variety of efforts to find what you are most passionate about. Dive in and follow your curiosities.

3. BE FLEXIBLE.

Learn where you're most needed and don't shy away from tasks that aren't the most ideal or the most fun. You can get involved with an organization for the aspects of it you love most, but there will always be other aspects, too. Embrace the challenge of operating outside your comfort zone. It's part of the process and it's always worth it—you never know what you'll discover about yourself along the way.

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“

I'm a very shy person when it comes to meeting new people. God really formed this confidence in me. From the beginning of meeting new people [volunteering], I just felt like I was myself.

”

—ABIGAIL CISNEROS,
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



4. MENTOR OTHERS.

Make supporting others part of your day-to-day life. Mentoring is a form of helping others that anyone can do. If someone reaches out with a question, take that opportunity to give back and serve by offering advice and support. What do you wish you knew at the beginning of your own journey in that realm? Start there.

5. VALUE THE ACT OF SERVICE.

Service is biblical, and it's something that anyone can give, no matter your financial situation. See acts of service as an investment in yourself and your community. Know that by offering your time, you're putting in effort to make the world a little bit better than you found it.

6. LOOK TO MAKE A LONG-TERM DIFFERENCE.

Consider how you can make an impact for years and decades to come. Look at systems and challenges an organization faces and take action to improve efforts. Don't just do the work for the moment—look to the future, too.

7. SEE WHERE YOU CAN ADD VALUE.

You have particular gifts and skills so focus on how to best use your strengths. Certainly, it's important to strengthen your weaknesses, but it's even more important to be aware of and utilize your God-given skill-set. What can you bring to the table?

8. FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW AND LEARN.

Take the lead on projects or offer to help in more areas than one. Expand your horizons and make an effort to do more than is necessary or expected. Volunteering provides so many opportunities to expand your knowledge and experience. Many times, volunteering puts you in situations you may never otherwise find yourself in. Get the most of it by simply being open to learning as much as possible.

9. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TOO.

As important as it is to give to others, it's equally important to refuel and take care of yourself. Know when to slow down and fill your tank. Avoid overloading your schedule, which can lead to burnout. Give back where you can so you can continue to make an impact for the long haul.

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“

This is one of the most dynamic groups I've ever been a part of, and I've been a part of a lot of groups. Everybody is just a go-getter.

”

—FREDDIE SILVERIA,
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA



Remember: You and your skills, gifts and know-how are needed—now more than ever.

You can make an impact simply by being you and being willing to serve.

WHERE TO START?

Did you know The Salvation Army served more than 23 million Americans last year fighting hunger, homelessness, substance abuse and more—all in a Fight for Good?

That's almost one person every second, every day.

Visit volunteer.usawest.org to volunteer with The Salvation Army near you.

Not sure how you want to contribute? Take our quiz to find your cause today.

“

We all have talents. Some are hidden and some are quite obvious. Most of those talents can serve others also.

”

—DAVID JONES, BROOMFIELD, COLORADO



DAVID JONES found himself out of work as a chef when the catering company he worked for no longer had any business to cater to in the pandemic. But he kept cooking, volunteering with The Salvation Army in Broomfield, Colorado, where he made lunch for 100 seniors a day. Listen to his story on the **Do Gooders Podcast** in an episode on how to do what you love as a Salvation Army volunteer.

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