

## **VOLUNTEERS : How to get started and thereby to enrich your life!**

From Giving Is Not Just For The Very Rich: A How-to Guide For Giving and Philanthropy

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Volunteering is so central to the American way of life. It takes concern for others, imagination and perseverance, but not money, so it is the easiest way to give for everyone. Yet something important is required – a lot of thought about how you can be most helpful. First choose the category where you want to help make a difference: hunger, less advantaged young people, schools, hospitals, emergency situations, animals, the environment, and many more. Next consider the organizations and groups around you that could use your help, such as religious-affiliated organizations, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, neighborhood groups, etc. and find out how you can assist them and how much time and effort it would take. Once you have found activities where you feel you can be really useful, apply your abilities to strengthen programs and help others.

If you want a broad range of choices, go to [www.volunteer.match.org](http://www.volunteer.match.org) and check out the possibilities by location and institution out of the more than 79,000 nonprofit organizations listed. They have made almost six million referrals since 1998.

**AmeriCorps** is a comprehensive government agency offering about 75,000 opportunities for community service on the national and state levels to tutor and mentor disadvantaged youth, fight illiteracy, build affordable housing, clean parks and streams and other services. In addition,

it has a special AmeriCorps VISTA program to provide full-time capacity-builders to bring low-income individual and communities out of poverty. The AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC ) is designed especially for full-time people ages 18-24 to strengthen communities while developing leaders. Full-time young people who complete their service receive education awards to help pay college and graduate school expenses and some AmeriCorps members may receive a modest living allowance while they are serving.

([www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov))

The **HandsOn Network** is the largest American volunteer structure with more than 70,000 corporate, faith and nonprofit organization programs to enlist volunteer service. As part of their outreach efforts, they provide AmeriCorps Alums with more than 120,000 experienced volunteer leaders committed to lifelong improvement of their communities.

([www.handsonnetwork.org](http://www.handsonnetwork.org))

Among the outstanding volunteer organizations is **Big Brothers Big Sisters** has been supporting mentoring services for more than 100 years to “provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.” ([www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org))

With all these choices, what are you waiting for?