

The How and Why of Volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to participate in making change, and it can be a fun and illuminating experience as well. The hands-on learning experience of volunteering can also help you learn more about the causes and organizations you hold dear, making you a better, more effective donor.

You can enrich the work and the cause with the unique talents that only you can offer.

1. Make sure the work is a good fit, both for you and for the organization.

Volunteering takes many forms, from tutoring a student to participating in a neighborhood cleanup to helping a small organization make sure its accounts are in order. If you want to volunteer, set yourself some general guidelines of what you're looking for. Would you like it to be similar to your professional work, or completely different? Should it be physically demanding or something you can do virtually? Would you like to meet new people or work with familiar faces?

At the same time, make sure you're signing up for work that will be helpful to the organization and the people or causes it serves. If you try to create tasks that interest you but don't serve the organization's needs and clients, you may distract valuable time and resources from the strategic mission. You also have to be realistic with the amount of time you can dedicate whether it's an one-time opportunity or a long-term commitment.

Be willing to experiment and try things you might not ordinarily try. Taking on new challenges is a great way to learn.

2. Use volunteering as a chance to engage friends and family.

Working toward a common task — especially one that is for the benefit of others — is a great way to bring people together. When you volunteer with your family, you have a chance to share your values with them and show them what is meaningful to them, which in turn opens the door to conversations about what values, shared and differing, are the dearest to them.

Volunteering with friends is an opportunity to hang out and spend time while still fulfilling a sense of purpose and meaning. At the same time, the opportunity to make new friends is one of the great joys of volunteering. What better way to bond than through a shared love of helping others?

3. Start simple and build from there..

Los Angeles is blessed with organizations that make volunteering a snap — Big Sunday offers opportunities across the region and throughout the year (and not just on Sundays!) that are open and welcome to people of all experience levels; Project Giving Kids uses technology to help kids, youths, and families volunteer in ways that suit their schedules and

interests; and LA Works engages Angelenos in caring for their own communities by participating in projects that provide our neighbors with vital services.

Whether you connect through one of these great organizations, a non-profit you know and love, or any other path, start with tasks and time commitments that you know you can achieve. Give yourself flexibility to experiment with different types of work and different organizations.

Over time, you may find you want to become more deeply involved with a particular organization, such as by becoming a volunteer board member. Above all, find ways to engage that are fun, rewarding, and keep you coming back for more.

Volunteering means many things to many people, and there's no single right way to do it beyond what feels most right, and most positive, to you. However you choose to volunteer, we hope you will approach it with a spirit of openness, experimentation, and generosity of spirit.

Through trial and error, find the work that suits you best and enriches you, and in turn you can enrich the work and the cause with the unique talents that only you can offer.

Please feel free to contact your Relationship Manager or the Donor Relations Team at donorrelations@calfund.org if you have any questions. We are here to help.

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