

# VOLUNTEERISM



*You may have been thinking “I could be doing more with my life,” and the word “volunteerism” keeps coming up in your conversations with others.*

What you may not have realized is this: In 2003, the AARP conducted a survey on Time and Money, focusing on the 45 and older population. They found there can be formal or informal volunteering.

**Formal volunteering** usually occurs through an agency or organization.

**Informal volunteering** describes all other kinds of volunteering including family.

Many people have found that volunteering can enrich their lives. It is common for people to report that they are getting more out of their volunteerism activities than the people they are helping. Give some thought to the following ideas, and consider discussing them with your coach.

About half (51%) of the surveyed population reported volunteering for a non-profit, charity, school, hospital, religious organization, neighborhood, civic or other group. One of the top motivations for volunteering was a sense of personal responsibility to help others; personal interests also played a role. They also found that those who volunteered almost always were donors as well.<sup>i</sup>

**1** **Know why you are volunteering**, because people volunteer for a variety of reasons. Ask yourself what you want to get out of volunteerism – what need will it fill in you? Examples of the reasons people volunteer include:

- Meeting and working with others
- Experiencing a sense of achievement
- Using one’s leadership skills.

If your volunteerism satisfies needs, that is your “paycheck” for doing the “job.”

**2** **Identify what kind of volunteer opportunity would be best for you.** For example, if you want to meet and work with others, you don’t want to be alone in a cubicle compiling statistics for an organization. But if you like working alone, that cubicle may be your cup of tea. Similarly, serving on the board of a community agency may be a great way

## VOLUNTEERISM

to use your leadership skills. You may notice that an important key to successful volunteering is knowing yourself.

3

***Think about in what setting you would like to volunteer.*** Do you want to work with children, adults, or maybe even other seniors? Do you want to work in a hospital or nursing home setting? Perhaps you want a more light-hearted venue, such as athletics, community gardening, the arts, museums or nature spots. Would you prefer working outdoors? The point is this: The more questions you can answer about yourself, the more successful your search will be for the right volunteer job.



Another important question to think about is ***when*** do you want to volunteer?

What time of day or evening? How often? Do

you want a long-term volunteer job, or might you prefer more of a project, with a beginning and an ending?

Volunteer activities that would fall into the category of a project include, for example, working on a golf tournament to raise money for a specific cause, or helping with a building project in the community. High quality volunteerism can be challenging and, at the same time, exciting.

The questions asked above may be answered best by exploring aspects of yourself with a skilled coach. Together, you can explore how the wide wonderful world of volunteerism might fit into your plan for a happy and contented life.

---

<sup>i</sup> [http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/general/multic\\_2003\\_1.pdf](http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/general/multic_2003_1.pdf)