

10 Amazing Organizations For Senior Volunteers

By Jerilyn Covert | January 11, 2019

Find the one that speaks to you, and get ready to reap the many benefits of volunteering.



As you're vowing to eat less, exercise more, and stay in shape all year long, consider adding another healthy habit to your goals: volunteering.

You'll help others, and new data suggests volunteering can positively impact your health too. When researchers compared the self-

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Reported health status of non-volunteers with those of volunteers in federal-run programs (more on those later), they found roughly 80

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percent of volunteers—all ages 55 or older—reported having good, very good, or excellent health versus just 50 percent among non-volunteers of similar ages and backgrounds. Volunteers also reported fewer mobility problems and higher life satisfaction.

What's more, the volunteers reported enjoying better health than they did before volunteering. Nearly half saw health improvements after just one year of service, and two-thirds reported feeling less isolated (<https://www.silversneakers.com/blog/reconnect-isolation/>). Of the volunteers who started out with five or more symptoms of depression (<https://www.silversneakers.com/blog/depression-older-adults/>), 70 percent saw those symptoms subside.

The report builds on a growing body of research linking volunteering with physical and mental benefits—particularly among older adults.

“Volunteers have lower mortality rates, lower rates of depression, increased strength and energy, and fewer physical limitations than those who do not volunteer,” says Samantha Jo Warfield, spokesperson for the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency behind the study.

It seems word is getting out. More Americans than ever are volunteering, according to 2018 statistics. In fact, baby boomers are giving more than 2.2 billion service hours, more than any other age group.

Still, even as the number of volunteers continues to grow, so too does the demand for them. That's why we pulled together this list of 10 truly standout organizations that need your help.

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Finding a Worthy Cause

Each organization on our list meets the following basic requirements:

- It's either a federal agency or a registered 501(c)(3) public charity that's generated at least \$1 million in annual revenue.
- It has been operating for at least 5 years.
- It's widely accessible to U.S. volunteers.
- It spends less than 25 percent of expenses on administrative overhead.

Beyond that, they're all doing admirable work to make a lasting, positive impact. Find the one that speaks to you, and get ready to have a healthy, fulfilling year!

1. Senior Corps

The cause: Harnessing the experience and dedication of adults 55 years and older to strengthen communities across the country



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That report we just mentioned? Those volunteers served through Senior Corps, a government agency that helps older adults put their experience to good use by helping others.

Through the Foster Grandparent program, active in 8,000 locations across the United States, volunteers can serve as role models, mentors, and tutors to children and youth in need. Another program, Senior Companion, connects volunteers with older adults who need help with daily tasks like food shopping and paying bills.

Learn more and get involved: Visit [NationalService.gov/senior-corps](https://www.nationalservice.gov/senior-corps) (<https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>).

2. National Park Service

The cause: Preserving America's landscapes and history



Caring for more than 85 million acres of American landscape and historic sites isn't easy—that's why the National Park Service (NPS) **Look better and feel energized with Silver Sneakers** needs your help.

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“We take care of America’s most special places,” says Kathy Kupper, a volunteer-turned-spokesperson for the NPS. “These parks are part of the American story. People can be part of that.”

The country’s 418 sites rely on volunteers who greet visitors, hand out information, and lead tours. Bank 250 service hours, and you get a free annual pass to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites. Some even turn volunteering into a season-long trip by becoming a campground host in exchange for a campsite.

Not into history or the great outdoors? No problem. “We match the skill set of the volunteer to the needs of the park,” Kupper says. “If someone calls who’s a librarian or a photographer or a videographer, that might not be somebody we knew we were looking for. But we would gladly work with them.”

Learn more and get involved: Volunteer opportunities are posted on Volunteer.gov (<https://www.volunteer.gov/>), but it’s better to contact the park you’re interested in and ask for the volunteer coordinator, who may know of park needs not posted online.

3. Meals on Wheels

The cause: Providing meals (and company) to homebound seniors



Through its network of 5,000 independently run local programs, Meals on Wheels operates in nearly every community in America. The most common volunteer job is delivering meals (and friendly greetings) to homebound seniors. You pick up meals at a central location and deliver them along a predetermined route. When you're finished, you return the delivery packaging and carry on with your day.

"Often, a volunteer is the only person an isolated, homebound senior will see in a given day," says spokesperson Jenny Bertollette Young.

And as the number of seniors continues to grow—it's projected to double by 2060, Young says—so does the need for volunteers. "It will take a huge increase in volunteer resources to meet the need going forward."

Learn more and get involved: Visit [AmericaLetsDoLunch.org](https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/americaletsdolunch/) (<https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/americaletsdolunch/>) to find a program near you, and then reach out to that program directly.

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4. Feeding America

The cause: Fighting hunger



As the largest domestic hunger-relief organization in the country, Feeding America is leading the fight to end hunger in America, where one in eight people still struggles to get enough to eat.

With 200 food banks nationwide, the nonprofit not only helps some 46 million people, but it also works to raise awareness and advocates for policies that aid hungry individuals. Volunteers can help sort food, answer calls, and assist with administrative work. Those with a flexible schedule, like retirees, are in especially high demand.

Learn more and get involved: Find your local food bank at [FeedingAmerica.org/volunteer](https://www.feedingamerica.org/volunteer) (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/volunteer>), and contact it directly to ask where they need help.

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5. Canine Companions for Independence

The cause: Providing trained assistance dogs to people with disabilities free of charge



As the largest provider of assistance dogs in the country, Canine Companions for Independence connects expertly trained dogs to people with disabilities, totally free of charge.

“Volunteers are our foundation,” says Jeanine Konopelski, director of marketing. “They make our mission possible.”

The organization has six training centers across the country and more than 40 volunteer chapters providing support. But volunteer puppy raisers can live anywhere in the United States.

How it works: You raise the puppy from eight weeks to 18 months and are responsible for attending puppy classes, teaching basic commands, and socializing the puppy. During that time, you submit

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monthly reports on the puppy's progress and cover the cost of care, including approved food, supplies, and veterinary visits. Those expenses are usually tax deductible.

If that's too big a commitment, you can also assist in organizing events, dog walking, office work, and campus beautification.

Learn more and get involved: Visit [CCI.org/volunteer](http://www.cci.org/volunteer) (<http://www.cci.org/get-involved/ways-to-volunteer/>), or call 800-572-BARK (2275).

6. Peace Corps

The cause: To promote world peace by helping development-interested countries

Ever wish you'd joined the Peace Corps when you were younger? It's not too late. In fact, with its 50-plus initiative, the federal agency is now actively courting older adults. The reason: Retirees often bring just the kind of life skills, professional experience, and tested maturity that the organization is looking for.

Volunteers are trained and placed across the world in jobs like farming, teaching, or leading grassroots efforts to protect the environment. Service can last from three months to two years. Housing and a living stipend are provided, and all medical expenses during service, including preventative care, are covered.

Learn more or get involved: Check out the 50-plus opportunity here (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/is-peace-corps-right-for-me/50plus/>). **Look better and feel energized with SilverSneakers** [LEARN MORE](#)

7. The Prem Rawat Foundation

The cause: Addressing fundamental human needs and promoting peace around the world

You don't have to leave your house to change the world. The Prem Rawat Foundation offers a variety of volunteer opportunities you can do remotely from home. Roles include translators, writers, proofreaders, or designers.

In fact, most of the team are volunteers, allowing the vast majority of funds go where needed: to programs that help deliver food, water, education, and a message of peace across the world.

Learn more and get involved: Visit [TPRF.org/volunteer](https://www.tprf.org/volunteer) (<https://www.tprf.org/how-to-help-2/volunteer/>) to check and apply for available opportunities.

8. Days for Girls

The cause: Delivering sanitary care and education for girls around the globe



Across the world, hundreds of millions of women and adolescent girls lack access to menstrual hygiene supplies. Many resort to using rags, mattress stuffing, or even cow dung—and they may miss school days because of it.

Days for Girls is on a mission to change that. Starting as a grassroots effort in 2008, it's reached more than 1 million girls and women in 125-plus countries, delivering sanitary kits containing washable pads and other essentials.

“Girls will often cry and hug their kits after getting them,” says Tiffany Larson, international chapters director. “Some even dance with them. It makes a tangible difference in their lives.”

Volunteers meet in groups or work individually from home to sew these items and the drawstring bags they come in. The organization has more than 1,000 chapters and teams, and more than 4,000 solo sewists. Patterns offer detailed instruction and fabric guidelines.

You're expected to cover supplies, though chapters and teams can hold fundraisers to help with the cost.

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Can't sew? There are plenty of ways to get involved, Larson says.

Learn more and get involved: If you'd like to sew, check out your options here (<https://www.daysforgirls.org/chaptersandteams>). For non-sewers, see other ways you can help here (<https://www.daysforgirls.org/get-involved>).

9. Habitat for Humanity

The cause: Providing affordable housing for everyone

If you're handy with tools, this may be a great fit. The nonprofit builds and renovates homes for families who need them. Volunteers work side by side with the future homeowners, who will later pay an affordable mortgage.

You can pitch in locally or travel where needed. The RV Care-A-Vanners program is available to anyone with a recreational vehicle. You can travel the country training Habitat affiliates on safety or help rebuild communities recovering after a disaster.

Not so handy? Volunteers are also needed to staff offices, act as gofers around a build site, or lend a hand at ReStores, which are home improvement stores and donation centers selling new and gently used furniture, appliances, home goods, building materials, and more.

Learn more and get involved: Check out all the opportunities at [Habitat.org/volunteer](https://www.habitat.org/volunteer) (<https://www.habitat.org/volunteer>).

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10. USO

The cause: Improving the lives of veterans and military families

Sometimes those who serve can use a little help themselves. Enter the USO, the 77-year-old organization committed to supporting military men and women. Volunteers work special events, greet homecoming veterans, or simply provide a listening ear.

The congressionally chartered, private organization has local centers across the country (<https://www.uso.org/locations>).

Learn more and get involved: Visit [USO.org/volunteer](https://www.uso.org/volunteer) (<https://www.uso.org/take-action/volunteer>), or email volunteers@uso.org (<mailto:volunteers@uso.org>).

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Already a member? Get your SilverSneakers member ID and exclusive fitness content by logging in to or creating your online account here (<https://tools.silversneakers.com/Account/Login>).

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