

VOLUNTEERING:

Do What You Like To Do



TEEN HELP HOTLINE



National Crime Prevention Council



"To enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur."

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose primary mission is to enable people to create safer and more caring communities by addressing the causes of crime and violence and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and a national focus for crime prevention: it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, more than 4,000 national, federal, state, and local organizations committed to preventing crime. It hosts a number of websites that offer prevention tips to individuals, describe prevention practices for community building, and help anchor prevention policy into laws and budgets. It operates demonstration programs in schools, neighborhoods, and entire jurisdictions and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention and youth service; it also administers the Center for Faith and Service. NCPC manages the McGruff® "Take A Bite Out Of Crime®" public service advertising campaign. NCPC is funded through a variety of government agencies, corporate and private foundations, and donations from private individuals.

This campaign was made possible through Cooperative Funding Agreement No. 2002-DD-BX-K004 from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Opinions are those of NCPC or cited sources and do not necessarily reflect U.S. Department of Justice policy or positions. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

This publication was made possible in part by a generous grant from ADT Security Services, Inc. (a unit of Tyco Fire and Security Services, and corporate partner of the National Crime Prevention Council.) Celebrating its 129th anniversary, ADT Security Services, Inc., a business unit of Tyco Fire & Security, is the largest provider of electronic security services to nearly six million commercial, government, and residential customers throughout the United States. ADT's total security solutions include intrusion, fire protection, closed circuit television, access control, critical condition monitoring, electronic article surveillance, and integrated systems. ADT's web site address is www.adt.com.

Copyright © 2004 National Crime Prevention Council

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America
February 2004

National Crime Prevention Council
1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Thirteenth Floor
Washington, DC 20036-5325
202-466-6272
www.ncpc.org

ISBN 1-929888-38-4

School,

VOLUNTEERING.

*No matter what
you like to do, there's
a way you can do it
and help others, too.*

*If you have a skill or
hobby, pass it on...
and have fun at the
same time.*

homework, and chores probably take up a lot of your time.

If you're like most teenagers, your day-to-day life is jam-packed with things to do. School, homework, and chores probably take up a lot of your time. Maybe you're into sports, with practice and games after school or on weekends. Maybe you belong to a band, write for the school newspaper, take drivers' education classes, or watch younger siblings after school. Maybe you work a part-time job, too. Hanging out with friends, talking on the phone, playing computer games—all these activities make you a busy teenager.

Maybe you're also the kind of teenager who notices things around you, like the homeless woman you pass every day, the run-down playground on the next block, or graffiti on the walls of your school. On the news you hear about crime, social injustice, and environmental problems that trouble you but seem too big or far away for you to affect. You'd like to make things better and safer, but you wonder—what can one teenager do to bring about change?



The good news is that making a difference in the lives of others can become a part of your everyday life with very little effort—and you can do it by doing what you already like to do. For example, do you

SPEND hours on the phone? Volunteer to take calls for a teen crisis hotline.

KNOW how to kick a soccer ball? Help coach younger kids.

ENJOY performing in school plays? Gather your actor friends and put on a show about bullying prevention at a youth center.

LOVE cute, furry, cuddly animals? Volunteer at your local animal shelter or foster a pet waiting for adoption.

CONSIDER yourself a math whiz? Tutor kids after school at your local Boys & Girls Club.

LIKE arts and crafts? Decorate an "anonymous tip" box for crime reporting at your school.

READ under the covers at night with a flashlight? Share your love of books by reading to younger children, seniors, or the visually impaired.

BABYSIT to earn your spending money? Offer free babysitting to a family you know that is struggling with illness or financial problems.

WANT to be a lawyer? Find out if your area has a teen court and volunteer to play the role of prosecutor or defense attorney in the courtroom.

Everybody Benefits

Volunteering benefits you as well
as the people and communities you help.

Here are a few ways you benefit from volunteering:

- You gain new skills and get first-hand experience using them.
- You meet new people from different cultures, age groups, and income levels.
- You become aware of your talents and abilities in a new way.
- You have experiences that may lead to a future career or hobby.
- You contribute to the well-being of the community in which you live.
- You have the satisfaction of knowing you have made a real difference in someone's life.
- You have input into the law-making process when you communicate your concerns to lawmakers.
- You feel trusted and appreciated by those you help.
- You prove that teenagers are up to good works.
- You have fun.

Here are a few ways that individuals and communities benefit when you and other teenagers volunteer:

- People who receive help are comforted by knowing that someone cares about them.
- At-risk children who are mentored and tutored do better in school.
- Homeless dogs at the animal shelter that are walked and socialized by volunteers are more adoptable.
- Neighborhoods that are cleaned up and beautified experience less crime.
- Law enforcement has an easier job catching criminals when crime and vandalism are promptly reported.
- Members of the community come to see teenagers as real assets rather than problems.
- Wildlife thrives when habitats are protected and cleaned up.
- Other youth who want to make a difference can use you as a role model.

Remember that you cannot always see or measure the benefits of volunteering immediately. Sometimes the things you do today will improve the lives of others, or add to your own life, in the future. By volunteering, you not only help yourself, but you make your community and your country a safer and better place in which to live.

Doing It Your Way

When you imagine volunteering, you may think about donating toys at holiday time or cleaning up a local park. These are very common volunteer activities. But volunteering can involve all kinds of activities and approaches that suit any type of personality.

Some volunteer activities bring you face-to-face with the person or persons you are helping. Examples of these direct service activities are tutoring at-risk youth, delivering meals to the home-bound, and performing at a day care center.

Some volunteer activities are performed "behind the scenes." Examples of these indirect service activities are collecting used clothing for the homeless, renovating an abandoned playground, and writing a neighborhood newsletter.

Some volunteer activities involve lending your voice and talents to correct a problem or an injustice. Examples of these advocacy activities are attending a youth violence prevention rally or conference, writing to your congressman or senator about a neighborhood safety problem, and taking part in a marathon to raise awareness and funds for curing a disease.

When choosing a volunteer activity,
start by asking yourself the following questions:

WHAT DO I ENJOY DOING THAT I COULD ALSO DO TO HELP OTHERS?

Write down all the things you like to do and how you learned to do them. Did someone teach you? Did you learn by yourself? Could you "pass it on" by teaching someone else?

WHAT KINDS OF PROBLEMS AND CAUSES INTEREST ME?

It's a big world out there. Whether you're concerned about endangered whales, homeless people, air pollution, or neighborhood crime, you can always find some way to help a cause you care about.

WHAT KINDS OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES WOULD MOST BENEFIT MY COMMUNITY?

Many things can be done right in your own neighborhood to make a difference. Creating a backyard habitat can help local wildlife. Walking younger children to school can help keep them safe. Creating and handing out a neighborhood directory can make people feel less isolated.

WHAT KINDS OF SKILLS AND RESOURCES CAN I BRING TO THE PROBLEM?

Do you worry that you are too young or inexperienced to help solve a problem? Basic skills are all you really need to make a difference. Perhaps you don't have the tools or skills to renovate old playground equipment, but you can wash cars to raise money for that purpose.

Fundraising

Use your talents and interests to raise money for a cause that is important to you. If you invite friends and family members to get involved, you can raise more money and have more fun doing it.

Here are some ways you can raise money for a cause:

- Wash cars ● Babysit ● Do yard work ● Sell homemade crafts items
- Do hair or make-up ● Put on a performance ● Run a bake sale ● Wash dogs
- Set up a lemonade stand ● Sell old toys at a yard sale
- Decorate T-shirts and sell them ● Raffle off a home-cooked meal
- Walk dogs for working neighbors

Here are some ways to use the money you raise:

- Help pay heating bills for people who've lost their jobs.
- Buy back-to-school supplies for needy children.
- Send a child to camp who might otherwise be unable to go.
 - Purchase hats, mittens, toys, and other items for homeless families.
 - Provide bulletproof vests for police dogs.
- Sponsor a child or community in a developing country.
- Contribute to an environmental group such as the Sierra Club.
- Purchase new equipment for an abandoned playground.
- Pay for photocopying a neighborhood directory.

WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE?

Think about your goals. Perhaps you want to learn about auto mechanics, building construction, or needlepoint. Perhaps you want to be a lawyer or medical worker one day. Pick a volunteer activity that matches your goal. Volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, for example, will teach you about building construction.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE TO SPEND ON VOLUNTEERING?

Whether you have a lot of time to spend on a volunteer project or just a little, remember that you can make a difference in people's lives in only minutes or hours. Some projects can be done right at home, like researching an environmental problem and then emailing a letter of support.

Choosing

You may already have something in mind that you would like to do. If you need help matching your interest or skill to a volunteer activity, the following list offers some suggestions.

the Right Project

ANIMALS

- Foster a stray dog, cat, or other pet.
- Volunteer to help out at your local animal shelter.
- Raise money to buy bulletproof vests for police dogs.
- Report any sign of animal abuse to the humane society.
- Write letters to elected officials regarding animal rights issues.
- Work with guide dogs for the blind.
- Create a backyard habitat.

ART AND CRAFTS

- Organize a graffiti paint-out project.
- Create posters about vandalism prevention for the community center.
- Decorate an "anonymous tip" box for crime reporting at your school.
- Do face painting at school or community fairs.
- Knit baby blankets and newborn caps for maternity centers.
- Fill a shoebox with art activities for hospitalized kids to do.

CARS AND DRIVING

- Help clean and repair old cars for donation.
- Distribute information in your neighborhood on how to prevent auto theft.
- Join your local chapter of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD).
- Run errands for homebound neighbors.
- Help deliver Meals-on-Wheels.
- Wash cars to raise funds for the fire or police department.

CHILDREN

- Run a toy drive for needy children.
- Teach therapeutic riding to disabled children.
- Mentor/tutor at-risk children at a Boys & Girls club.
- Baby-sit for a family that is struggling financially.
- Be a junior camp counselor in the summer.
- Form safety patrols to walk younger children to and from school.

CLOTHING

- Donate clothes you no longer wear to a homeless shelter.
- Run a clothing drive at your school or church.
- Repair torn clothing for donation.
- Help a disabled person shop for clothes.

COMPUTERS

- Teach computer skills to seniors or children in aftercare programs.
- Create a website for your local Neighborhood Watch group.
- Send emails to elected officials concerning a cause you support.
- Create a neighborhood directory.
- Research an issue on which you may want to take action.
- Become an email pen pal with a resident of a nursing home.

CONSTRUCTION

- Paint and repair houses for seniors or disabled people in your community.
- Restore an abandoned playground.
- Join Habitat for Humanity and help construct houses.
- Build a dollhouse or wooden toys for children at a homeless shelter.

COOKING

- Help cook for a local soup kitchen.
- Prepare nutritious meals for sick or needy people in your neighborhood.
- Teach a cooking class to younger children in an after-school program.
- Make brownies or bread to take to a nursing home.
- Create and sell a neighborhood cookbook to raise funds for a community project.

GARDENING

- Help a senior with home security by trimming shrubs that hide windows or doors.
- Plant a vegetable garden for a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Start a community garden in your neighborhood.
- Clean up a park in your community and plant flowers and trees.

MUSIC AND PERFORMING

- Put on a puppet show about bullying for a daycare center.
- Create plays on the dangers of alcohol and drugs or child abuse.
- Perform a holiday skit at a nursing home or day care center.
- Join a community choir or band that performs at senior centers.
- Write a rap song about a crime prevention issue in your area.
- Teach younger children how to play your favorite instrument.

NEIGHBORHOOD

- Run a crime prevention booth at a neighborhood block party.
- Help start a Neighborhood Watch or School Watch group.
- Write and distribute a community newsletter and directory.
- Organize a clean up of any area that is littered or painted with graffiti.
- Send greeting cards to new neighbors.
- Help create a neighborhood disaster preparedness plan.

OTHER CULTURES

- Talk to your family about hosting a foreign-exchange student.
- Help a refugee family through your church or community center.
- Teach new immigrants to speak English.
- Take part in an international fair and distribute crime prevention information.
- Be a pen pal with a teen in a foreign country.

OUT-OF-DOORS

- Take a youth group on a camping trip.
- Clear nature trails for hikers.
- Volunteer at a summer camp for disabled children.
- Monitor a stream for pollution.
- Plant a new tree where one has fallen or been cut down.

READING

- Collect books for donation to needy families.
- Set up a small library and resource center in your neighborhood.
- Read to younger children at a daycare center.
- Tutor younger children who have trouble with reading.

SHOPPING

- Help homebound people by running their errands.
- Buy back-to-school supplies and fill backpacks for needy children.
- Do grocery shopping for a soup kitchen.
- Escort seniors to the bank and local shops.

SPORTS

- Coach a little league team in your neighborhood
- Take part in walk- and run-a-thons to raise funds and awareness.
- Help with events like the Special Olympics.
- Organize a sports competition to raise money for the fire or police department.

TALKING

- Volunteer to take calls at a teen crisis center.
- Offer to be an emergency phone contact for children alone after school.
- Be a daily phone contact for a homebound neighbor.
- Call your friends to talk about a volunteer project.
- Offer support to a teen crime victim and accompany him or her to court.
- Give a presentation on street safety to children at a daycare center.

Some kinds of volunteer activities, such as tending the yard of a homebound neighbor or babysitting for a single mom you know, can be done without going through an organization. Just knock on the door and offer your help.

Other activities require you to partner with an organization. For example, if you want to do arts and crafts at an after-school program for at-risk kids, cook for the homeless, or foster an animal waiting for adoption, you will need to contact an organization that is already involved and offer your services. Use the Yellow Pages to find an organization that matches your interest.

The following organizations often use volunteers and may even have a volunteer coordinator on staff to help you get started.

- Museums
- Libraries
- Meals on Wheels
- Senior citizen centers
- Community centers
- Nature centers
- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Homeless shelters
- Soup kitchens
- Summer camps
- Churches and synagogues
- Animal shelters
- Sports clubs
- Police departments
- Daycare centers
- After-school programs

Another way to match your interest to a volunteer activity is through the Internet. The following websites offer information on volunteering. By entering your zip code or city and state, you can learn about volunteer projects going on right in your community that you can be part of, too.

Teens, Crime and the Community
www.nationaltcc.org

Youth as Resources
www.yar.org

USA Freedom Corps
www.usafreedomcorps.gov

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

Points of Light Foundation
www.pointsoflight.org

Network For Good
www.networkforgood.org

United Way of America
<http://nationalunitedway.org>

America's Promise
The Alliance for Youth
www.americaspromise.org

Youth Service America
www.SERVE.net.org

Big Brothers Big Sister of America
www.bbbsa.org

Volunteer Match
www.volunteermatch.org

Make a Difference Day
www.makeadifferenceday.com

City Year
www.cityyear.org

Youth Crime Watch of America
www.ycwa.org

National 4-H Council
www.areyouintoit.com

Students Against Destructive
Decisions
www.saddonline.com

Girl Scouts of the USA
www.girlscouts.org

Boy Scouts of America
www.scouting.org

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
www.bgca.org

Idealist
www.idealist.org

Corporation for National Service
www.cns.gov

Campfire Boys and Girls
www.campfire.org

You CAN Make a Difference

Compassion for others is one of the most important values anyone can have. Acknowledge what you already do for your family, your friends, and your community. Our world faces enormous challenges, but everyone—regardless of age or ability—can help solve them. The world is a better and safer place when we care for others and they care for us. So do what you like to do, but share it with others. By doing so, you will strengthen your family, your community, and also your country.

Do What You Like To Do

VOLUNTEERING:

