

Sharing and caring at the holidays

December 2014 Newsletter



Many people want to “give back” during the holidays. That’s why volunteering is so popular this time of year. Did you know that some people sign up a year in advance to help those in need over the holidays?

You can volunteer right now

You don’t have to plan that far ahead to give to a worthy cause. Many of us can’t commit in advance. But there are still countless ways to share. Here are a few ideas:

- **Call a nursing home and ask if you can read to a resident or just visit to chat.** Offer to run a group game like bingo or trivia. Or you might lead a sing-a-long. If you’re crafty, ask if you can make cards or decorations.
- **Help our troops.** Your gift can buy soldiers books, phone calls home, internet time and more. You can also donate to kids of deployed military parents. Help them go to camp or get bedtime story DVDs recorded by their special soldier. For more ideas, visit <http://USOVolunteer.org> or other groups that help our military.
- **Visit <http://BEANELF.org> to become a reader of “Dear Santa” letters written by needy kids.** Choose one or more wishes to fill and send the gifts through Operation Santa.
- **Call your local United Way or visit <http://UNITEDWAY.org>.** They need mentors and tutors. They train volunteers to help domestic abuse victims and other groups who are at risk. United Way also partners with local agencies to provide the help that is most needed in your area.
- **Gather a little chorale of family and friends.** Then go to a nursing home or hospital to sing holiday or classic tunes. Make sure to call ahead for clearance. If allowed, go room-to-room and take requests. Or set up in a lounge area and perform.

- **Donate new toys for needy kids to Toys for Tots.** To find a drop off, visit <http://TOYSFORTOTS.org>.
- **Sell your own items on eBay and give some or all of the profits to a charity.**
- **Volunteer at an animal shelter while regular staff takes time off for the holidays.**
- **Watch your newspaper and grocery bulletin board for volunteer ads.**
- **Invite a friend or coworker who’s alone to your holiday dinner.**
- **Contact your local food pantry.** Find the nearest one at <http://FEEDINGAMERICA.org>. Donate your time or food. Learn how to set up a food drive in your neighborhood or at work.
- **Bake and drop off treats at your fire, police and emergency squad stations.** It’s an easy way to say “Thank you” and “Happy holidays.”

Share the experience

Ask friends or family to volunteer with you. It’s a great way to build meaningful memories. Get kids and teens to join in so they learn about giving as well as getting.

You don’t need a lot of time or money to help make someone else’s holiday brighter. Sharing at the holidays is about giving your most precious resource: you!