



## Volunteering Season Isn't Just During the Holiday Season

By Plamedie Ifasso

**Volunteering is a great way to take care of your community, and it is important that when you choose to become a volunteer you make sure your time is being used effectively so that your impact can be greater. There are numerous organizations across the nation that need help, so whatever date and time you pick to volunteer will be appreciated. But while setting aside time to give back is a nice gesture, the focus seems to only be prominent during the holiday season. Giving a turkey during Thanksgiving or making a meal on Christmas will definitely help someone in the community, but more than 46 million people depend on soup kitchens and pantries, so people still struggle after the cheerful time is over. “Hunger isn’t just a holiday issue.” Clay Dunn, the senior vice president of Share Our Strength told Time magazine in 2015. “There are many ways for individuals to get involved throughout the year.” You are not using your time effectively when you restrict your volunteer efforts to the end of the year only. During that time, non-profits receive a large amount of one-time volunteers which can be draining for the organization to teach all of those attendees.**

**“The real need for volunteer support is when the hustle and bustle of the holiday season is over” Ashely McCumber, the CEO of Meals on Wheels San**

**Francisco, added. Charity professionals note that minor holidays such as Independence Day, Labor Day and Memorial Day tend to get overlooked, and because not many people think of volunteering during those smaller days, organizations have a hard time finding people to help. If you can only volunteer during a holiday, perhaps think of looking that some of those other days that you normally don't think that much about it.**

**I know that some people have traditions with their friends or families where they carve out time to volunteer during the months of November and December, don't worry, you don't have to completely abandon that tradition. Charity organizations recommend volunteering two weeks before or after Thanksgiving and Christmas. "Helping a food bank get the infrastructure together to service people in need is much more helpful" Eileen Heisman, CEO of the National Philanthropic Trust pointed out. The work doesn't start or end when community members receive their meals, but the beginning of the process starts with the planning and ends when the venue is cleaned. It is important to keep that mind when choosing which shifts you work in because charities will need your help before and after the event takes place.**

**A great upcoming season to lend a helping hand that most people don't think of is during summer break. Children who come from families suffering from food insecurities no longer get free and reduced lunch, so they lose access to breakfast and lunch. During the academic year, more than 20 million children receive food assistance, but during the summer months less than 4 million are a part of a meal plan program. Many religious and social organizations do not hold as many events as they do during the school year. During this season, community programs will be desperate for volunteers because large amounts of children and their families are put in difficult position when school closes. There is a need for volunteers, but people just must be willing to give a moment of their time to answer the call.**

**My family suffers financially, and my brothers and I have always received free and reduced lunch, so that is why volunteering my time is something that I try to do as much as I can. But I know it might be tempting to ignore some of these issues when it is not affecting you personally, but as human beings we should strive to want to help others in our community. If we take a stand and actively work to improve the world around us, a change will be seen. It may feel overwhelming at first, but that is why it is important to reach out when you**

**can and make sure your time is being used as effectively as possible. If you want to see a difference in the world, it must start with you.**

References:

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