

Right Fit for You, Volunteering 101 – Questions to Ask Yourself

by Tony Omernik, from Secrets of the Happiest Retirees

Meaningful volunteering is an important part of the happy retirement lifestyle for many older adults. Along with providing a sense of purpose and numerous health, social and cognitive benefits, volunteering which is the “**right fit for you**” can also energize your life. The most important thing is determining what type of volunteering experience is the “right fit for you”.

Here are some **Questions to Ask Yourself Before Volunteering:**

- Why do you want to volunteer? In addition to the mission of helping others.
- What causes are important to you? Who do you want to help?
- Is it important for you to interact with the people/animals you serve, or are you happy to support them without interaction?
- Which skills do you want to use?
- Which skills do you want to learn?
- What do you NOT want to do as part of your volunteering?
- What is your time availability? Once a week, month, seasonally, occasionally, etc.
- How much time can you give each time? 1 hour, 2 hours, 4 hours, etc.
- What is the best day/time for you to volunteer? Weekday mornings, weekday afternoon, evenings, Saturday or Sunday?
- How far are you willing to travel to volunteer? 10 min or less, 15-20 min, 20-30 min
- Are you not able to travel and need a volunteer opportunity you can do from home?
- What personal goals would you like to attain through volunteering?
- What hobbies/interests would you like to incorporate?

After considering the above questions and you find a cause or organization that seems like a good fit, often it is helpful to see if you can “try it before you buy it”. Many organizations will allow you to observe the volunteer job in action before making the commitment. A good example of this is the Meals on Wheels program where you can go on a ride-along to get an idea of what delivering a noon meal to our homebound elderly neighbors is like. You will not only better understand the duties of the volunteer job, you will know how it makes you feel. The experience will help you determine if it is the right fit for you.

“Right Fit for You” volunteering can be one of the most meaningful aspects of your happy retirement lifestyle. Numerous studies and research over the years have shown the many health, cognitive and social benefits of volunteering. Volunteers live healthier, happier and longer lives. Don’t be surprised that it could be one of the most fulfilling and enjoyable things you’ve ever done. Doing good, feels good, and is good for you!

(over)

Cause you want to help	Weekly	Monthly	Occasional	Seasonally	One-time events
Arts					
Animals					
Children					
Elderly					
Environment					
Homelessness					
Hunger					
Healthcare					
Sports					
Disabilities					
Literacy					
Politics					
Faith/Church					
Disaster Relief					

What personal goals do you want to achieve as part of your volunteer experience?

- ☐ To be active
☐ To be social
☐ To combine my hobby time with service time
☐ To spend purposeful time with friends/family/spouse
☐ To be stimulated cognitively
☐ To learn new things
☐ To make a difference
☐ To meet new people
☐ Other _____
☐ Other _____

What to Expect of Your Volunteer Experience:

- Proper training and orientation to do the job
- You understand the impact of your effort, how you are helping
- The job fits your skills and abilities
- The job fits your schedule and available time so it doesn't limit other things you want to do
- You have everything you need to do the work
- Enough work to do to fill the time you have committed
- You have support available if you have questions or need help