

Enjoy

Volunteering: A Different Way To Donate

Donating time and experience to a favored cause is a way to make a difference in a very personal way. Volunteering for a worthy organization allows you to use the skills you've developed over the years and meet people who share your interests.

Putting Skills to Work

A contribution of expertise can be just as important as a financial donation. Skills that you've used in a job or hobby can greatly benefit a nonprofit organization. Grassroots organizations in particular may have only a few people to run their activities.

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Finding a Good Match

Finding an organization that's a good "fit" may take some time. You'll probably get the most satisfaction and be most effective working with organizations that support causes you feel are worthwhile. Time is another factor that will help you select the right organization. Many volunteer jobs require a regular time commitment.

Analyzing Strengths

What are your strengths? If you're outgoing and personable, you may be a natural when it comes to fundraising. Or maybe you love animals and would enjoy volunteering at a shelter or pet adoption clinic. Thinking about your attributes opens up new possibilities for volunteering your time.

Deducting Volunteer Expenses

Volunteers sometimes incur out-of-pocket expenses. This raises the question: are these deductible? While the value of contributed services cannot be deducted for income-tax purposes, other expenses *may* be tax deductible if they are not reimbursed by the nonprofit organization.

To be deductible, they must be expenses the charity would have incurred. For example, the cost of materials donated to repair a church would be deductible. The cost of stamps, envelopes, and computer paper used in connection with



volunteer work would also be deductible. Other deductible expenses may include:

- **Driving costs.** Volunteers can deduct 14 cents per mile when they use their own vehicles for volunteer work. Or, they can deduct their actual unreimbursed gas and oil expenses. In either case, parking fees and tolls are an extra deduction.
- **Overnight travel.** Volunteers can also deduct expenses incurred when they

travel away from home on behalf of an organization. The deduction can include transportation, hotel, and meal costs, as long as the trip doesn't have a significant "personal" element.

- **Uniforms.** Volunteers, such as nurses aides, who are required to wear uniforms when they perform volunteer services, can deduct the cost of their uniforms if the uniform isn't a garment they would otherwise wear.

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