

Many senior citizens who have spent most of their lives working wonder why they should become senior volunteers.

Here are a few reasons why each and every American senior should consider becoming a retired volunteer. Volunteering can even help you live longer!!

**1. Volunteerism is essential to the United States.** Especially during times of financial crisis, the United States needs volunteers in order to keep things running! Presidents have been calling for increased volunteerism since the 1930s, and 2009's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act did the same. The Act managed to mobilize more than 135,000 new volunteers in the past year alone, and these 135,000 have managed to help a massive 1.1 MILLION people!

**2. The American work industry still needs seniors.** Despite all the hard work retired people have done throughout their lives, communities still need active seniors! While all volunteers make a difference in the organizations they serve, the knowledge and experience of seniors helps them make an even bigger difference than the "Average Joe." A retired volunteer with a lot of expertise can save a great organization a lot of money!

**3. Senior volunteers help bridge the generation gap.** Obviously, many young people volunteer in all kinds of different organizations, so seniors who choose to do the same help to bridge the generation gap! Cultural differences between current seniors and young people are huge, and include issues such as technology, norms of workplace behavior, and political differences. When seniors choose to volunteer alongside young people, there is an opportunity for each generation to learn something from the other.

**4. Senior volunteers help create future leaders.** Another benefit of volunteering with young people is that a senior's lifetime of experiences can help young people to become better volunteers!

**5. Senior volunteers can choose to do work that is meaningful to them.**

Unfortunately, many people work for most of their lives in fields that don't actually interest them. Because volunteer opportunities are endless for so many different types of organizations, senior volunteers have the opportunity to choose work that they actually find important and exciting! In fact, the Corporation for National and Community Service, a national service program, reports on a study that finds that retired volunteers are more satisfied with their lives than people who continue to work for pay.

**6. Volunteering can help keep seniors' brains sharp.** Senior Corps, one of the largest seniors programs and part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, provides an online journal as part of its program. A recent article reports on a very exciting new study that demonstrates that senior volunteers' work in social programs can not only help keep senior citizens' brains in good shape, but that such volunteerism can actually increase brain function and cognitive abilities! In short, becoming a retired volunteer can actually make a senior citizen smarter!

**7. Becoming a retired volunteer is good for a senior's physical health.** Another Senior Corps journal article on a UCLA study suggests that productive activities seem to slow many of the consequences of aging among senior citizens. This study specifically suggests that, out of all forms of productive activity, volunteering seems to generate the best results!

**8. Volunteering helps seniors get out of the house and back into their communities.** Many seniors spend a whole lot of time at home. In fact, a recent article in the L.A. Times states that seniors currently spend between half and three-quarters of their time awake watching television! This sort of social isolation helps explain why so many seniors suffer from depression. Estimates on the frequency of diagnosed depression among senior citizens range from 6 to 6.5 million of the 35 million Americans aged 65 years and older. Senior volunteers spend less time at home and more time in their communities, which helps them make friends and increase their social and support circles.

**9. Volunteering is rewarding.** Another thing that's well-known to help combat depression in all people is giving to others, as this brings joy to oneself! Even if a senior isn't depressed, becoming a senior volunteer is a rewarding experience that reduces stress and increases happiness.

**10. Volunteering may prolong seniors' lives!** The Corporation for National Community Service also reports on a study in which seniors who provide social support for others through volunteering had lower rates of mortality than those who didn't! The same national service program notes that, on a larger scale, states with higher volunteer rates among seniors generally have lower mortality rates. This just points back to how significantly volunteering can improve seniors' physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

**11. Senior volunteers can work around their own schedules.** Even very busy, active seniors can become volunteers! Most organizations are more than happy to work with their volunteers' schedules. Plus, because organizations very much appreciate the skills and experience of seniors, they are often extra-flexible when it comes to retired volunteers.

**12. Great resources, including seniors programs, make volunteering easy!** One previously mentioned national seniors program, RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program), provides a retired senior volunteer program for each state. Literally all national seniors can find a retired senior volunteer program locally! It offers a very wide range of volunteer opportunities in thousands of different organizations, and proactively works with seniors to determine what organization might be best for them in terms of skills and time commitment.

Another outstanding retired senior volunteer program is Civic Ventures, which works to engage the newly-retiring baby boomers in volunteer work. Civic Ventures is an especially great resource for seniors interested in working to solve serious social

problems, as it focuses on issues of social justice like education, the environment, healthcare, and homelessness.

Yet another great place to get started is VolunteerMatch, which is an superb national service program. VolunteerMatch serves people of all ages, so while it's not specifically a retired senior volunteer program, it's especially excited to help seniors find organizations that best suit their volunteering needs and desires. More than 72,000 different organizations use this national service program to help find volunteers, so all retired seniors can easily find an opportunity that works for them!

Source: [www.seniorcorps.org](http://www.seniorcorps.org)