



Applying My Talent to Volunteer Service

The ideal volunteer role is one that is a good fit for your talents, aptitudes, interests, and passions—when hours of service do not compromise your primary responsibilities including work, relationships, spiritual life, rest/recreation, and overall health and fitness.

Before considering a specific volunteer role we suggest you thoughtfully complete the survey in the pages that follow. 1) Review your own talents, interests, and values as you determine how your personal profile relates to available avenues of service. 2) Choose roles that are consistent with your profile, and practical considering the time investment required for effective service, and your continuing education and training.

Our goal is to match you with roles that are a good fit, do not compromise other areas of your life, and equip you to serve as a specialist in your area of choice. It might be helpful to review several principles for choosing a specialist volunteer role: **This survey is to keep for your private use only—designed to help you find a rewarding, best-fit specialization.**

1) Your paths of service are to line up with your capabilities. Know yourself well, and then choose a service path that lines up with your abilities, interests, and what you value most. It is surprising how many people overlook this very basic principle. When considered individually, most jobs are somewhat limited in scope: they do not allow for a full expression of our abilities and interests.

An avocation, hobby, or community service role can complete the vocational picture by allowing areas of expression that complement our full-time jobs. Consider, for example, the accountant whose full-time work is mentally challenging but requires little or no physical activity. Can he/she engage in a physically expressive avocation, hobby, or form of recreation to complement the more sedentary work role?

2) Your service is to be balanced with other essential areas of life. Harry Chapin's 1974 recording, *Cat's in the Cradle*, describes a well-intentioned father who kept promising to spend time with his son but never quite got around to it because he was too busy. Service within the context of a balanced life means that you have time for all of the other important areas of life—your work, intimacy with special people of your life, recreation, sleep, exercise, spiritual life, and applying your talents to volunteer service in home and community.

3) Be discerning as you consider how you can best serve your community. When it comes to people's needs, the saying, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," tends to be true. Sometimes we are wise to gently push our way past the squeaky wheels of this world—the people who yell loudest—to reach out to those quiet persons whose cries for help we can barely hear. A study of adolescent girls who had attempted suicide revealed that everyone felt a strong need to go to others for help in times of emotional stress, but only 4% of them were willing to go to others and ask for help.

4) Respect every type of work and service. How easy it is to place one person or job above another? On what basis can we honestly say that one job is superior to another? There are jobs with greater responsibility, greater visibility, and greater financial reward, but there are no inferior jobs; each has an important place in our world.

In one research project, people described the level of job satisfaction they experienced based on the work itself—the tasks they performed. It was not the lawyers, doctors, and corporate executives who reported the highest levels of job satisfaction, but rather the craftsmen and tradespeople—people who could see the fruit of their labors—who said they were happiest with their work.

5) When you have a worthwhile goal, take action, give it your best effort, and don't give up without good reason for doing so.

"Action is eloquence." (William Shakespeare)

"80% of success is showing up." (Woody Allen)

6) Stay off the shelf. Due to age, health, or other factors, folks sometimes assume that they have less to offer in work or volunteer service. Our society's notion of retirement at age 65 refers not to older adults' potential but is based upon an economically-based decision regarding retirement made in Germany in the mid-1800s.

If we are breathing and conscious, there is a place for us in this world—regardless of some limitations due to age or disability. Recall Harry Lieberman, who discovered a hidden talent and began a career as an artist at 80. At 104, he was still painting three to four hours per day. Mavis Lindgren, at 62, had a history of major medical problems. She began a progressive exercise program, and by 72, she had competed in a dozen marathons. She is the world record holder for the 26.2 mile event for women age 90 to 95. Noel Johnson was in bad shape at 68. After it was suggested he check into a nursing home he radically changed his unhealthy lifestyle. Noel authored a book at the age of 80 and ran the New York City Marathon at 92. Peter Strudwick ran in countless marathons, including the grueling Pikes Peak Marathon, even though he has no feet!

I. What I Want Most Out of Life

Listed below are five major areas of life, followed by a list of motivational themes. For each, indicate the level of value or importance to you by filling in the corresponding box.

0 = Zero importance

1 = Matters a little bit

2 = Matters somewhat

3 = This is important to me

4 = This is a major, non-negotiable priority for me

1. **Relationships**--Relationships include the following:

Belonging--Being accepted, with an unshakable and special place with others

Fellowship--Interacting with and enjoying the special people in my life

Intimacy--Having an in depth relationship in which we really know and enjoy one another

2. **Spirituality**—A vital, satisfying, meaningful, deepening spiritual life

3. **Vocation and career**--Meaningful work that is consistent with my talents, passions, and interests

4. **Recreation**--Having sufficient periods of enjoyable activity that restore my energy and renew my spirit

5. **Health and fitness**--My life not hindered by injury or disease or unresolved emotional conflict; having optimal levels of stamina, energy, strength, flexibility, and agility through proper nutrition, adequate sleep and sufficient exercise

6. Financial prosperity--Having income to meet needs and more; not being burdened by debt

7. Advancement in skills and knowledge; mastery--Increasing my skills or knowledge to the highest level

8. Career advancement--To move upward in authority, responsibility, or position

9. Achieving goals--Continually setting new goals and reaching them

10. Personal peace--Feeling safe; having deep inner peace

11. Recognition for personal achievements--Being praised or recognized for work well done

12. Humanitarian expression--Making a positive contribution to the lives of others

13. Competitive challenge--Bettering my best performance; winning; beating the competition

14. People impact--Being influential with people (e.g., by writing, speaking, counseling, teaching, acting, etc)

15. Creative expression--Making something new or unique; adding my personal touch to things

16. Task enjoyment--The sheer pleasure of performing a task or job or participating in an activity

17. Adventure--Experiencing the unknown, the unexplored, the risky; things new and exciting

18. Independence/autonomy--Having the personal freedom to direct my own life, set my own agenda

II. My Interests & Passions

Using the scale to the right, in the box beside each major area, identify your level of interest (even if you have no ability in that area). Place a checkmark to the left of any *specific* activity in an area of strong interest. Again, consider only your INTEREST, whether you have that ability or not.

0 = no interest at all
1 = some interest
2 = moderate interest
3 = strong interest
4 = passionate interest

19. Musical - For example, one or more :

- Composing
- Writing music
- Singing
- Playing an instrument
- Conducting an orchestra
- Leading a band or a chorus

20. Artistic - For example:

- Sculpting, ceramics, wood carving
- Painting or drawing
- Woodworking; cabinet making
- Crafts--sewing, macrame, etc.
- Interior design and decorating
- Landscaping
- Architecture
- Flower arranging
- Jewelry making
- Precision skill with the hands—such as dentist, surgeon, precision machinist
- Calligraphy
- Photography
- Meal creation (e.g., as a chef)

21. Academic - For example:

- Math
- Science - physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, anthropology
- Philosophy
- Theology
- Psychology
- Logic; debating
- Formal academic studies

22. Linguistic - For example:

- Writing - book, letters, articles, poetry, script for a play
- Speaking
- Learning a language
- Teaching

23. Physical activity - For example:

- Heavy or challenging physical work
- Athletic activity
- Recreational activity such as hiking, swimming, physical games
- Work tasks, including fixing things, yard work, gardening
- Trades - electrical, plumbing, carpentry, masonry, metalwork
- House remodeling (the hands-on work)
- Exercise - individual and/or group

24. Interpersonal, relational - For example:

- Helping, counseling, supporting people in need
- Mediating a conflict
- Mentoring someone
- Conversing
- Leading a group or team
- Managing others
- Selling, persuading
- Directing a play, production, or program
- Greeting
- Hosting

25. General creative - For example:

- Inventing
- Designing
- Performing—dancing, acting, reading poetry
- Improvisation
- Developing a new theory
- Participating in challenging brain games and puzzles

III. Exploring My Abilities and Aptitudes

Instructions: On the pages to follow is a list of skills spread over many different types of ability. Consider the evidence provided by your own experience and, on the response sheet, mark each item in the way it best describes you:

- 0 = This skill/quality is not evident in my life.
1 = I have very limited skill in this area.
2 = I am of moderate skill or strength in this skill/quality
3 = I am strong in this skill/quality, but with practice I could become stronger
4 = I excel in this skill/quality--as strong as those who would use the skill to excel in their work, but with practice I could reach this level of expertise

Physical Abilities (Bodily-Kinesthetic)

26. I typically have a high level of endurance.
27. I have good balance, coordination, and agility--for example, event in a particular activity I have participated in: tennis, golf, martial arts, fencing, basketball, baseball, dancing, gymnastics, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, or water skiing.
28. I am physically strong.
29. I can learn and perform precision tasks with my hands (as a chef, surgeon or machinist, for example).
30. I can run fast.

Language Abilities (Linguistic)

31. I can read, speak, and understand a foreign language.
32. I am a good public speaker or presenter.
33. I can write well with one or more of the following—articles, letters, poetry, or books.
34. I have an extensive vocabulary and good memory for words; I know a lot of words and their correct meaning and how to use them.
35. I have good reading comprehension; I understand and remember what I read.

Relational Abilities (Interpersonal)

36. I am able to lead—to engage the talents and cooperation of others in achieving an objective or completing a task.
37. I am able to work cooperatively with one or more other persons; I can be a valuable group or team member.
38. I can accurately “read” (understand) what another is saying, not just through words, but through tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc.
39. I can establish and maintain empathy—recognize and remain in contact with another’s feelings, in a conversation, or by observing another.
40. I am good at engaging another in conversation.

Logical, Reasoning, or Academic Abilities (Logical-Mathematical)

- 41. I can reason well—understand another’s argument; or come up with an argument to persuade others.
- 42. I can organize things into useful systems.
- 43. I am good at learning and remembering information, theories, or facts.
- 44. I can learn and remember mental procedures involving many steps .
- 45. I can invent things, or create better ways to do or learn things.

Artistic Abilities (Artistic-Spatial)

- 46. I can coordinate designs or objects to blend well and I can see which colors blend (go well together) and which one’s don’t; I can coordinate colors to blend well.
- 47. I can clearly imagine how a room, structure, setting, painting, photographed scene, or piece of sculpture that I am working on will appear when I am finished.
- 48. I have a good sense of direction; I seem to be able to find my way around without getting lost, and I can follow a good map without getting confused.
- 49. I can accurately do one of the following: draw, paint, sculpt, build, or craft what I see or imagine.
- 50. In my mind I can clearly visualize faces, scenes or designs I’ve just seen; the mental images are as clear and bright as they are when I see them with my eyes.

Musical Abilities

- 51. I have a quality singing voice.
- 52. I can play a musical instrument.
- 53. I can compose original tunes, in my imagination playing the tunes I create.
- 54. I can lead a choir, or band, or orchestra.

One more step -

An additional page follows.

If . . .

Regardless of your current age, pretend you are now 30 years of age. If you had **all** of the necessary credentials, and you were immediately granted **all** the necessary knowledge, wisdom, skill, and body and brain strength and health to carry out your work, what vocation/occupation would you choose?

My choice: _____

Why would you choose that vocation?

The why of my choice: _____

What do you consider to be your greatest strength?

About Heroes

In your growing up years, from early childhood through teen-age years, who was the person—living or dead; real or fictitious—you admired most?

My choice: _____

What did you admire about that person?

Three qualities I admired most:

1

2

3

What specialist volunteer roles do I see as a best-fit, given my talents, aptitudes, interests, and available time?

1st choice

2nd choice

3rd choice

4th choice
