



Volunteerism and Disability

By Raquel Castaneda

“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.” - Muhammad Ali

April is volunteer appreciation month and I thought it would be a good idea to highlight volunteerism in relation to disability. I think that many times when we think about volunteering and disability, we see people helping people with disabilities and not the other way around. Individuals with a disability can have a lot to offer as well and I think it is important to give them the opportunity to try. Volunteering is a great way to give

back to your community and there are countless different ways to do it.

Volunteering also has several different benefits that help build character. We will start by exploring how volunteering helps you develop new skills; an example would be someone volunteering in a kitchen with no prior cooking experience and learning how to cook a certain dish or dishes while volunteering there. It'll also help you build your experience to add to your resume. It often helps you look good on paper when you have experience in a certain field while trying

to get a job, even if its volunteer experience.

When thinking about what kind of volunteer work you can do, think about what you already like to do and what are your limitations. Using the internet is something that's easy to do, especially if you lack social skills, are homebound, or have limited mobility. The following link is a website that gives you a multitude of ways to volunteer while staying at home.

<http://helpfromhome.org/category/actions/campaigns/disabled-volunteering/actions-for-the-immobile>

Another great idea you can do from home is writing letters. You can write letters to our troops. Here are a few places you can send them too:

<https://www.operationgratitude.com/writeletters/>

http://amillionthanks.org/send_a_letter.php

This concept can also work for writing letters to the elderly at nursing homes. You can find the address of a local nursing home and mail them there yourself or drop them off.

For those who would like to do traditional volunteering, there are many opportunities available. You can contact local organizations, churches, and businesses to find an opportunity that you would enjoy. Some places you can try are local playgrounds, food banks, shelters, libraries, nursing homes, or almost anything else you might think of. If you feel as if you cannot do it on your own, ask someone to accompany you. It could be a friend, a family member, or even your PCA. You will have to find out who is in charge and discuss the terms of volunteering on your own behalf or with the help of someone you trust.

****Please Note**:** I believe it is important to find a paying job, volunteering is something to do for fun, to make yourself feel better, and to give back. I do not recommend volunteering instead of finding a job. Volunteering is something to do on the side or when you have free time.



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