

The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

OCTOBER 2020 • VOLUME 25, ISSUE 10

FIND NEW MEANING IN LIFE: BE A VOLUNTEER

BY ANNE FARGUSSON

The other day, I saw a TV news program that featured a young woman who had been granted a wish by the Make a Wish Foundation when she was a teenager. (That nonprofit organization grants wishes to terminally ill children.) The young woman, who is still in remission, made a statement that I thought was the essence of volunteering. She said that if she could do it all over again, she would give her wish away to someone else. She gets more joy over making someone else's wish come true than her own. She now volunteers for the foundation.

During the pandemic, I've been thinking a lot about Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe

**"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brother and sisters of mine, you did for me."
Matthew 25:40**



STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.

discover what they are doing. Organizations look for volunteers with various talents. Go online and look for one that will spark your interest. Or start your own! I know several people that have started foundations for various causes.

I want to add a small note for those who are recruiting volunteers. One of the keys to getting volunteers is not to overwhelm them. They need to trust that you value them and will not stress them out. You have probably heard the saying, "beggars can't be choosers." If you are looking for volunteers, don't get caught using the "begging" method. Many people try this approach. Yes, it does work at times, because it is a tried and true method, but the question is, "who do you end up with?" You generally get people that you wish you had never asked to be involved. The upside is that these people generally don't stick around.

Volunteerism requires structure and accountability. Take it seriously, but enjoy yourself and the people who volunteer. Make a written list of what you need, and brainstorm who might do it well. Then approach potential volunteers with the idea, reassuring them that their tasks are arranged and structured so they won't be stressed. Let them know what, when, where, and how. Make sure they know you have their best interests in mind, and praise them for their participation. Show appreciation by sending a card or arranging a small party or meal together. Pray with them.

As you have read about volunteerism, I hope you have been inspired. As you see, it is not that difficult. The main things to remember are to pick something that you have an interest in, take care of yourself, and show appreciation. It is an exciting adventure. I agree with the late actor Robin Williams, who said, "Make your life spectacular." That is what your life will become as you choose to volunteer. You can do it!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne Fergusson is retired from a career as registered nurse with a B.S.N. degree. She was certified in wound, ostomy and continence care and served as a wound care specialist until her retirement. She and

her pastor husband, Ed, served in several churches in Northern California where she was always active in children's ministries. They have identical twin sons who are both emergency physicians. She is the author of the book *Volunteers: How to Get Them, How to Keep Them!*, which is available on Amazon.



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Stewardship Ministries
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Pacific Union Conference
Stewardship Ministries
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Editorial: Bernard Castillo



Meals on Wheels ensures that seniors have access to adequate nutrition even when family support, mobility, and resources are lacking.

you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brother and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:34-40, NIV).

This is a wakeup call to action. How do you respond to the call in Matthew 25? Volunteerism is what it is all about. Once you volunteer, I guarantee you will find new meaning in life. You will see the world differently. Not only will you be helping someone else, you will also find it personally rewarding as you experience a sense of calling. Once you start sharing, you will feel good as you give from your heart with love, thoughtfulness, and devotion. You will have a real sense of peace and satisfaction as you make volunteering a regular act of service and a normal pattern of life.

I have always been interested in volunteering. Through the years, I've helped out in my local church in several different capacities, including children's programs, choir, and evangelism. I currently volunteer at a local library once a week, doing odd jobs – everything from making sure there is scrap paper at the computer stations to locating books that have been requested, to assisting patrons. It is a lot of fun! I also volunteer for an Alzheimer's organization in my city, helping with support groups, forums, special events, presentations, and programs.

When my twin sons were young, our family got involved with Meals On Wheels, a program that provides a healthy lunch for seniors several times a week. The seniors appreciated the food, but it was the visit that they really looked forward to – and so did we! As our boys got older, they became involved with evangelism projects and also went on some trips with Maranatha Volunteers International, a nonprofit organization that works in conjunction with the Adventist church to provide buildings for worship and education. When our sons were in medical school, they participated in volunteer mission trips, and now as doctors they continue to have a service mindset.

It may take some time to find a good volunteer position, but it's worth it. What are you interested in? Do you enjoy working with adults,

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children, or pets? Is there a cause you are passionate about? Do you have special skills? Years ago, I met a dentist who wanted to make a difference in his community, but he had no idea what to do. A counselor suggested that he use his career skills to help others. He contacted the elementary schools in his area and volunteered to teach a class on good dental hygiene. He enjoyed it so much that he encouraged his colleagues to get involved.

If you want to volunteer, think outside the box! Here are a few ideas to get started:

Animal shelters – "Kill-free" shelters are beginning to be very popular. Rescuing and caring for cats and dogs can be rewarding and fun.

Make a Wish Foundation – Learn more about this great organization at wish.org.

Meals on Wheels – This organization ensures that seniors have access to adequate nutrition even when family support, mobility, and resources are lacking. Learn more at www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org.

Best Buddies International - This nonprofit is dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment, and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Check it out: www.bestbuddies.org.

Here are some more ideas: tutor school age children or adults, volunteer for clinical trials, help out at a coffee shop where the proceeds go to a nonprofit organization, raise funds for a ministry, join your local neighborhood watch, teach a class for your county's parks and recreation department. If you have professional skills, you might consider volunteering at a clinic or providing free legal assistance.

You are only limited by your imagination. Connect with others and



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