

Passion into Action Guide

What issues make you stop and think? What news stories make you want to DO something? When you walk down the street, do you see the effects of poverty in your community? Are the rivers and streams polluted? Have you, a friend, or a family member been personally affected by a disease?

You may be passionate about a huge global issue, such as HIV/AIDS, or about something closer to home, such as the neglected state of the playground in your neighborhood. The important thing is to know what fuels your passion.

Passion Finder Activity

What is your passion? Think about the hot-button issues in the last political election, the news stories that caught your attention, or other social problems that make you say, "Why doesn't someone do something about this?" Below is a list of some of today's biggest issues/causes. Add your own if you want. Then, choose the five that speak to you the most and rank them according to how passionate you are about them.

- Animals (homeless pets, endangered species, etc.)
- Civil rights
- Community revitalization
- Disaster relief
- Domestic abuse
- Education/tutoring/mentoring
- Employment
- Environment/conservation
- Health care
- Health-related issues (cancer, HIV/AIDS, etc.)

- Homelessness
- Housing (building, renovation)
- Human rights
- Hunger

- People with disabilities
- Poverty
- Racial wealth divide
- Recreation/sports
- Seniors
- Technology
- Women
- Youth

Find Service Opportunities

How do you turn your passion – the issue that makes you want to DO something – into action that will change your community or the world?

First, find out what's already being done to address this issue. Is there's something going on locally where you can plug in? Maybe the PTA is planning a work day to revitalize the school building; the American Red Cross is collecting supplies for people affected by wildfires; or your neighborhood association is going to rake leaves for some elderly residents.

You can find a volunteer opportunity in your community or register a new project on [Engage](#), Points of Light's digital hub for volunteerism and community engagement.

Points of Light operates through a network of innovative volunteer-mobilizing organizations located in more than 250 cities across 37 countries. Together we are inspiring, equipping and mobilizing more people to use their time, talent, voice and money to create positive change in their communities. Find the [volunteer center](#) closest to you.

Decide How to Serve

You know what issues you are passionate about. You want to do something to help. But how do you decide on a service activity?

Your service activity should be something you will enjoy doing. It's an opportunity to use your passion and skills to help others (or to develop your personal or professional skills), meet others, and make a difference in your community. Here are a few things to think about:

1. What do you most enjoy doing with/for others?
2. When you look back on this time in your life, what is something that will stick in your memory? Why?
3. What do you want to accomplish?
4. What kinds of service projects or activities would you like to do?
5. How much time do you have to devote to service?

Create Opportunities to Serve

Working with an organization, school, or agency is a great way to plug into your community and do something that will make a real impact. Sometimes, though, all it takes is an idea, some motivation, and a few friends, family members, or even strangers working together.

Here are a few suggestions for service activities related to different issue areas.

- Animals – Collect food and supplies for an animal shelter.
- Education – Tutor children at a local school.
- Environment/conservation – Clean up a neighborhood park.
- Homelessness – Work with Habitat for Humanity to transform and revitalize a neighborhood.
- People with disabilities – Help at a therapeutic riding stable.
- Seniors – Start a visitation program at a nursing home or assisted living center.
- Women – Begin a peer education program for at-risk young women.
- Raise awareness of an issue – Host a Sunday Supper.

If you have personal or professional skills that you want to share with others, look for service opportunities where you can use them. Here are a few examples you might consider:

- Art – Teach art classes at a community center.
- Computer science – Build a website for a community organization or create a virtual mentoring program.
- English – Write grants for a nonprofit organization or tutor children.

- Journalism – Publish a newsletter to support neighborhood initiatives or use your photography skills to raise awareness of local events.
- Landscape architecture – Design landscaping for a senior center.

Plan Service Activities

If you choose to create your own service activity, take time to write out your goals and plans. These questions can help guide your planning:

1. Passion issue:
2. Briefly describe your project or activity.
3. What is your goal? What do you hope to accomplish?
4. Where will you do the project or activity (e.g., the park, a local school, your home, etc.)?
5. What are the steps required to accomplish your goals? Be sure to think about prep work and any clean-up.
6. Will you engage other people in your activity? If so, who?
7. What will they do?
8. How will you recruit them?
9. Will you be partnering with an agency or organization? If so, which one(s)?
10. What is the role of the partner organization(s)?
11. What supplies do you need for your activity?
12. How will you get these supplies?
13. Do you need money or supplies from outside sources? If so, how will you secure what you need?

Engage Others

Before you can begin recruiting supporters, you have to know who you need and what you want them to do. Map out a recruitment strategy – who, how, and when. (Note: The questions from “Plan Service Activities” can help with this.)

You can gain supporters and recruit volunteers in a variety of different ways. You can ask them one-on-one. You can post fliers and pass out brochures. You can visit classes or weekly meetings of the groups you want to involve. Don't forget social media,

newspaper or radio stations, bulletin boards, or blogs. Word-of-mouth is one of your best tools, so spread the message! Make sure your recruits know where to look to find out more information or to sign up for your event.

Find Resources

Many service opportunities only require your time and passion. Sometimes, though, your project will require money or other resources to be successful. So how do you recruit partners and sponsors to support your passion?

Grants, gifts, and in-kind donations (supplies or equipment) are a great way to get support from individuals, corporations, and community organizations. Contact businesses or organizations that already have a connection to your issue area or that are known to support social causes. Use your contacts and don't be afraid to make new ones.

Develop a strategy for approaching people or businesses about donating money, services, or in-kind goods.

- Who are the right people to talk to?
- How can you appeal to their needs or wants and motivate them to partner with you?
- In a few sentences, how can you communicate why your project is important, the difference it will make in the community, your ability to achieve your goals, and how the donor can be part of the effort?
- Specifically outline what you need from them (e.g., funds to purchase a certain item, three hours of professional consulting, services such as printing, etc.)

Make connections that count! Here are some tips:

- Start with people you know (family, friends, neighbors, other students).
- Ask people you know to engage their friends to support your project.
- Talk personally with people to sell your project and get their support.
- Know what you need and ask people how they can contribute.
- Don't be afraid to tap people's emotions (happiness, anger, passion) to motivate them to get involved.
- Try creative outreach approaches, such as posting fliers or hosting outreach stations on college campuses and at local corner stores, bus stops, fast food spots or other informal gathering places.

Be sure to thank your contacts and sponsors for supporting your cause.

Budget

After you have secured the resources you need for your project, don't forget to create a budget – and stick to it. Budgeting isn't always easy, but with the right tools, it can be quick, easy and painless. From the beginning of the planning process, manage your budget carefully. It's important to watch your expenses and the funds you have available through sponsorship or fundraising.

Here are some basic steps to preparing a budget:

1. Assess your needs. Determine what funding you need.
2. Recognize what you have. List funding and other resources you have from grants, gifts, and donations, etc.
3. Create categories. Separate costs by category (e.g., supplies, foods/beverages, printed goods, communication costs, volunteer recognition items, etc.).
4. Stick to your budget. Track your income and expenses based on the categories. If your budget starts getting off track, try to find out where you are over-spending (or under-spending) and adjust accordingly.

Manage Activity

Successful service projects have a good balance between logistics, time and people. As the leader, consider and coordinate these three elements carefully so you'll have a successful, productive activity.

1. Scheduling – What is the flow for the project? Do you have enough time to get everything done?
2. Access to event site – Will you be able to get into the service site and have access to things you need (such as water or restrooms)?
3. Registration – How will you register volunteers? What is your process for greeting them and getting them assigned to the right tasks?
4. Weather and attire – What should people wear? Do you have a back-up plan in case of rain?

5. Safety – How will you ensure everyone is safe as they serve? Be sure to think about things like age requirements or accessibility for people with disabilities.
6. Food, beverages and breaks – Are you providing food and beverages? Are breaks built into your schedule for the day?
7. Project wrap-up – How will you end the activity? Are volunteers expected to help clean-up? How will you celebrate the service?
8. Time – Establish a schedule (or run of show) for the project. This will help you manage the various details once on site. Do your best to keep things moving on time so that you accomplish the goals of the activity. Don't be afraid to adjust the work as needed; it's better to complete some of the tasks than to leave all of them half-finished. Volunteers will continue to feel motivated when they see progress, even if it's only part of the overall goal.
9. People – You've engaged other volunteers who are motivated by the same passion issue as you. Keep people motivated as they serve. Make sure they understand the purpose of the project, the various tasks and individual responsibilities. You want them to have fun, get the job done, and feel appreciated for their work. Remember to recognize and thank your volunteers and supporters for their service.

Need some tactical help to make sure you haven't forgotten anything during your project planning? Check out these handy checklists: [Project Readiness Checklist](#) and [Day of Project Checklist](#).

Tell Your Story

Before, during, and after you serve, take time to tell your story. What are you doing? Why? What's the impact or potential impact?

Publicity for your cause is essential. It can raise awareness of the issue, lead to possible community-generated solutions, boost support and sponsorship; and inspire people to take action.

You have lots of choices on how to publicize your message, including:

- Fliers, posters or banners
- Media campaigns
- Press releases
- Mass email distribution
- Online social networks, forums, and blogs

- Public announcements at local events

Make use of viral marketing, a technique that leverages people to spread a marketing message to others, creating potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. Consider these tips for using viral marketing to publicize your activities, gain support and secure resources:

- **Use word-of-mouth.** Once you have a core group of supporters, they will be your best resource for advertising and recruiting others. Think six degrees of separation: With a team of people talking about your cause and message, individuals can spread the word to many more people using their social networks than you can as one person.
- **Use more online and fewer printed materials.** Use online social networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Post blogs, videos, pictures and news updates as quick and effective marketing strategies. These online outlets facilitate 24-7 streams of communication and accessibility, which have notably increased civic mobilization and action.
- **Highlight and connect** the benefits of service to people's own motivations so they find personal value in engaging others.
- **Tap into existing networks** in the local area, such as neighborhood associations, college campuses, clubs, fraternities/sororities or community centers.

The viral nature of the web increases your ability to communicate quickly and effectively to thousands of people. By sharing information about something important to you through online social networks and content-rich media, such as blogs and videos, your messages are searchable, discoverable and can be seen by anyone using the internet.

As people actively respond to postings with their own questions, answers and opinions, your message can become self-sustaining thus increasing your chances for new and continued support. Your job is to start the conversation.

Celebrate Service

Celebration is one of the most important parts of service. No matter how you serve – alone or in a group, with an agency or through a self-organized project, for a day or a year – you should always celebrate what you've accomplished.

Recognition is part of celebration. It's a chance to thank everyone who is involved in the service effort: volunteers, donors, agency staff, the community and others. They have invested time, energy, attention and resources to make the service successful. Say thanks!

Celebration and recognition can be something as simple as saying the words or sending an email, or it can be a party or a coffee hour or a bulletin board beside the freeway. What's important is the effort, making sure that people (you, too!) know their service is appreciated.

1. How do you like to be recognized and thanked?
2. What would be an appropriate way to celebrate the people who are serving with you?
3. How can you incorporate celebration throughout the service activity?

Consider nominating a volunteer you work with for Points of Light's Daily Point of Light Award. Whether it's a mom leading a homegrown disaster relief drive or an athlete wielding his celebrity for good instead of goods – a Daily Point of Light embraces the challenge of tackling a community need through volunteer service.

Winners get formally recognized by Points of Light, a certificate signed by President George H. W. Bush – and a bit of the spotlight. [Nominate](#) a local hero today.

Project Readiness Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you're ready for your service project:

Scheduling

- Do you have a printed schedule for the event?
- Have you assigned volunteers to serve as task leaders to work with specific parts of the event?
- Has time been allotted for set up, breaks, lunch, clean-up, reflection and evaluation?
- Are volunteers aware of their scheduled volunteer time?

Access to event site

- Do volunteers have directions to the event?
- Is the project site accessible to people with disabilities?
- If the site is normally closed/secured, who will be available to provide access to the facilities?
- Is there a place where volunteers can put personal belongings?
- Do you know where volunteers should park?
- Do you have a way to tell volunteers where to park (signs, volunteers to direct traffic,etc.)?

Registration

- Has an area been designated for volunteer check-in?
- Have registration forms been created and printed?
- Do you have writing utensils?
- Do you have volunteer name tags?
- Do you have volunteers to manage registration?
- Have they been trained on how to sign-in volunteers?
- Do volunteers know whom to contact in case of a cancellation/emergency?

Weather and Attire

- Have you made contingency plans in the event of bad weather?
- Do volunteers know how to find out about a change in plans?
- Do you have a way to contact volunteers in case of an emergency?
- Do volunteers know how they should dress for the project?

Safety

- Are there first-aid kits, a water station, phones, as well as volunteer safety accessories on-site?
- Are there any special safety concerns for the use of special tools/supplies being used?
- Do you have instructional handouts for any tools being utilized?
- Do you have a plan for monitoring the site if there are construction tools being used?
- Do you know how you can encourage everyone to be safe and have fun?

Food, Beverages and Breaks

- Do you have a food/beverage station?
- Do you know if there is a specific place for volunteers to eat/drink or can it be anywhere on site?
- Do you have a volunteer who will help distribute the food and drinks?
- Do you have a plan to ensure that volunteers get a break?
- Do you have a volunteer who will monitor food/beverages and get more if necessary?

Project Wrap-up

- Do you have a plan for cleaning up the service site?
- Do you have trash bags and other clean-up supplies?
- Do you have a plan for celebrating the volunteers and their service?

Day of Project Checklist

Here's a quick checklist to help you think through the project details and your role as the project manager.

Project Preparation

- Arrive early.
- Verify that all materials are ready and tasks are assigned.
- Organize tools and materials in the space where they will be used.
- Set up stations for registration, water, first aid, etc.
- Verify that facilities are open and available (restrooms, electricity, etc.).
- Set out trash containers for easy access throughout the site.
- Hang project signage.
- Secure on-site storage, if necessary.
- Verify safety procedures, contingency plans, emergency call list, and other project details.

Volunteer Registration

- Welcome and register all volunteers.
- Have volunteers sign waiver of liability and/or photo release, if necessary.
- Distribute name tags for all volunteers and staff.

- Distribute project T-shirts, if necessary.
- Offer brochures about your program or fliers about future volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer orientation

- Gather all volunteers together for welcome and orientation.
- Thank volunteers.
- Present brief overview of the program, the project, and the community issue you are addressing.
- Be sure to discuss the impact the project can have on the community.
- Review the schedule for the day.
- Motivate volunteers through a group cheer or other activity.
- Discuss safety procedures and other important details for the day.
- Divide volunteers into task groups, with a task leader for each.
- Motivate and encourage volunteers. Thank them for their service.
- Manage the volunteers' time for effective service. Make sure each person has a task to complete.
- Prioritize tasks; complete the most important jobs first.
- At the half-way point, ask volunteers if there is too much or not enough to do.
- Have back-up projects available for extra work.
- Monitor safety.
- Be available/accessible for answering questions and troubleshooting.
- Encourage all volunteers and staff to have fun!

Project closure

- Clean up.
- Conduct a final walk-through of the service site, checking that all tasks have been completed, trash disposed of, and tools/materials put away.
- Gather volunteers together and review the accomplishments of the day.
- Facilitate a reflection activity.
- Solicit feedback through a formal or informal evaluation.
- Thank volunteers and tell them of future service opportunities.

