

# How To Volunteer As A Senior12 minute read

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Ramona Griego, an 81-year-old retiree, had recently lost her husband and, according to the [AARP](#), her diabetes wasn't getting any better. She soon developed depression and was looking for a way to improve her situation. After looking at different available options, Griego soon turned to volunteering.

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With the help of the Corporation for National and Community Service, she got involved with her community after visiting a senior center and started helping people her own age stay active and engaged. She said, "The program has allowed me to enjoy my life as I age, and I feel important when I can help my clients with small things that allow them to remain in their homes."

Volunteering truly gave Griego a new life. This is a common story for hundreds of thousands of elderly people. But this doesn't mean that everyone knows how to get involved volunteering or the benefits of doing so. Before digging into that, let's discuss how the breadth at which the elderly can volunteer.

Overall, the elderly makes up almost 25 percent of the volunteer population

## Seniors Who Volunteer, by the Numbers

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Millions of elderly people—those 65 and older—volunteer every year, but given this population is higher than 48 million (and projected to reach 80 million by 2050), there is plenty of room for growth here.

Between 2011 and 2015, the rate of the elderly population that volunteered has stayed about the same, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). (The rate has dropped about 5 percent for those between 55 and 64.) Although it'd be great to see an increase in that rate, that still

means that more than 11 million seniors volunteered at least once in 2015. Overall, the elderly makes up almost 25 percent of the volunteer population, and if you include the 55-64 demographic, it's more than 35 percent.

According to the [Corporation for National Community & Service](#), the most common forms of volunteering are:

- Collecting, serving, preparing, or distributing food
- Fundraising or selling items to raise money
- Engaging in general labor, like helping build homes or clean up parks
- Tutoring or teaching
- Mentoring the youth
- Collecting, making, or distributing clothing

Because of the rate at which they are more likely to be retired, elderly people simply have more time on their hands than almost every other age demographic that's eligible to work. Despite this, they don't have the highest percentage of the population who volunteer—that belongs to those aged 35 to 54 who are also at the height of their working days. So let's figure out exactly why volunteering is so important.

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## Why elderly people should volunteer

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Volunteering has its social, mental, and physical benefits for people of all ages. But these benefits truly reveal themselves for elderly folks, who often have more times on their hands, are less physically active, and engage less with the community than the average resident. According to [research conducted by multiple outlets](#), volunteers live longer, and that's because of a culmination of all the benefits we're about to discuss.

Let's take a look at some of the reasons:

### Socially beneficial

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One of the biggest difficulties for elderly people, especially after retirement, is staying social. Isolation occurs when seniors "have little contact with adult children, other relatives, or friends," according to Forbes. The [AARP](#) estimates that up to 17 percent of Americans 55 and older could be isolated from society. Forbes also notes that the main issues that stem from being isolated include a higher rate or mortality, higher medical bills, and greater likelihood of developing an illness. Volunteering can pull elderly folks out of isolation, even if it's only for a handful of hours a week. Volunteering at events at local religious institutions, parks, and museums are a great way to interact with a wide range people in the community.

### Good for your mental cognition

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As we age, there's an increase in the likelihood of someone developing cognitive issues, other memory loss issues, and motor function diseases. One thing that can help slow the advancements of these diseases is staying active and using your brain. Volunteering provides opportunities to keep conversation flowing, constantly stimulate the brain, and help overall cognitive functions stay active. One study discovered that 70 percent of elderly people who were experiencing five or more symptoms of depression saw a decrease in those symptoms after their first year of volunteering.

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## Helps give back to the community

Just as it would feel good for any person, volunteering allows you to give back to the community. Something that may set an elderly person apart from any other individual is the wealth of knowledge they possess. Let's say you spent 50 years feeding the poor while working for a nonprofit. You could then pass down generations of information to those looking to get into the nonprofit world at the volunteering level. This sense of giving isn't limited to those who have worked a lifetime in a field, because elderly people can volunteer at youth camps, churches, and a slew of places where younger generations gather. You can even become a mentor to a young person simply by being around them, telling them stories, and teaching them about life.

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## Physically engaging

Whether it's volunteering door-to-door for candidates in your local elections, helping build community gardens, or something in between, physical activity is vital for an elderly person. According to the University of Southern California's School of Gerontology, less than one third of people between 65 and 74 are physically active. That number halves for those over 75. Inactivity as you age can promote the advancement of heart issues, bone loss, joint pain, fat, and a slew of other health issues. Getting out and volunteering can help combat these issues.

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### Learn something new

Volunteering is a great way to learn a new skill that your previous decades of work wouldn't allow. For instance, maybe you had a passing interest in aquatics and sea life. You could volunteer at an aquarium to find out more information about animals you never knew about. All of this learning plays into the cognitive health benefits of volunteering we mentioned before.

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### Helps fill up a day and is flexible

Retirement is obviously an exciting and freeing time, but you may sometimes struggle with finding things to fill up your time. Volunteering can help get you out of the house a couple times a week and keep your social engagements alive. But the best part? It can be done on your own schedule! Volunteering also gives you something to look forward to. Where work engagements and meetings used to be the reason you get out of bed, volunteering can become a reason to get started in the morning.

Elderly people may have other reasons they want to volunteer, like spending more time with grandkids at their school or there may be religious aspects to it. But any reason to volunteer is a good one!

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# Types of Volunteering Opportunities for Seniors

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Now that we know why you should volunteer, it's time to get into the nitty gritty of the types of volunteering opportunities available. There are places and organizations to get involved with all over the community. Let's dig through a big list of volunteering opportunities and the benefits:

## Assisting a local politician whom you support

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Walking door-to-door is a physical activity that helps elderly people stay engaged and involved with the community.

## Helping feed the hungry or run local food drives

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This gets you into the community with the potential to use experience from their years of working to help get food to the poor at a quicker and more efficient clip.

## Become a mentor at a community youth center

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Youth centers are great places for elderly people to get involved in the volunteering sector. It provides a place for them to stay engaged with the community while passing down knowledge to the youth, potentially steering kids in a positive educational and social directions.

## Travel with an international volunteering service

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Help communities in need around the world that need aid with healthcare and education.

## Tutor online

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You don't always need to leave the house to get volunteering done. You can tutor and mentor kids over the Internet, which can help you stay engaged and conversational, especially when mobility is a challenge.

You can help folks at community centers or contact local businesses that need assistance through the first five months of the year.

## Get involved with tax season

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Elderly people with decades of experience filing taxes in their personal lives or for work can help others with this process. You can help folks at community centers or contact local businesses that need assistance through the first five months of the year. This is an especially

flexible form of volunteering, because the tax season only lasts about half of the year.

## Helping clean up the environment

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Every community can do its part in cleaning up the environment. Contact local relevant authorities and see how you can get involved in your community's efforts to help provide the cleanest environment possible.

The best part of this list is that there are thousands of other ways seniors can get into volunteering! This is just scratching the surface to provide a baseline of different ways to get involved in the community.

## How to Get Involved Volunteering as an Elderly Person

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This is the most important part of the process. Once a senior has decided they want to volunteer, it's important to know how to get involved. There are hundreds of organizations and websites that are partially or fully dedicated to getting people involved locally, nationally, and internationally.

We're sharing some of the primary organizations that exist on a national and international level for those who may want to inject travel into their volunteering experiences, too. These organizations include:

### AARP

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The American Association of Retired Peoples has volunteering opportunities all across America. While they have a large database for opportunities within their organization, they also have a portal for anyone looking for ways to help out in their communities. [The site](#) has you mark down all areas of interest in volunteering, including sports and recreation, arts, and poverty. There's really an opportunity for everyone.

### Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America

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As families relocate more than ever. Many children don't have an opportunity to visit and learn from their grandparents like our generations did. This is a shame and deprives kids from learning valuable lessons. As a volunteer for the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts of America you can share your knowledge and experiences and have a hand in creating new leaders for our future. You don't have to commit to being a troop leader, there are many other opportunities to be their cheerleader, guide, and mentor, helping them develop crucial skills and confidence to launch them into a lifetime of leadership. and special memories.

### Boys and Girls Club of America

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Boys and Girls Club of America. a program more than a century old, is dedicated to promoting the importance of education and putting kids on the right path. This after school program is especially designed for kids who need help and mentoring most. More than 4 million kids and

teens are impacted by their Boys & Girls Clubs. But another 7 million kids urgently need these services. Whether you help with homework, coach a game, or teach an art project, you'll have the opportunity to build healthy relationships with young people in need of adult guidance, and have a positive impact on their lives while enriching yours.

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### Senior Corps

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This government-created organization aims to connect people 55 and older with their community. They have a program that trains elderly people to be mentors and coaches for their community. [Senior Corps](#) connects more than 220,000 people with volunteering opportunities where they take their skills and lessons learned, and then introduce them to organizations and younger generations.

### Habitat for Humanity

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Habitat for Humanity believes everyone should have a decent place to live. Through Habitat for Humanity, communities join together to make safe, affordable housing available to all, while rehabilitating whole neighborhoods. You needn't be a skilled craftsman to volunteer. There are many opportunities to volunteer that don't require manual labor – such as working in their shops.

### Junior Achievement

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Sadly, more than 20% of US students will not graduate high school. This will, likely adversely affect them and their communities, not just for their lives, but for subsequent generations. Junior Achievement (JA) strives to help students realize that the education they are getting today will help them to have a bright future tomorrow. JA shows them **all** of the possibilities that lay before them. If you have a trade or skill to share, or a passion for learning – you can make a great impact in someone's life when and where they need it most.

### Big Brothers and Big Sisters

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There are youth in every community that need people older than them to help lead them from adolescence to adulthood. Sometimes, not everyone has family members who can do that, and even if they do, it's always helpful to have an older, wiser person around. The Big Brothers Big Sisters program is an excellent way to get involved with advancing the youth of today.

### Peace Corps

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You're never too old to get involved with the Peace Corps. A volunteer-based program run by the government, the Peace Corps travels to communities around the world to improve overall lifestyles, from helping with health campaigns to teaching various subjects to promoting entrepreneurship. Health concerns may limit where elderly people can volunteer, but the Peace Corps won't turn its back on someone willing to help.

There are many options not included on this list that are available in your own community, and you don't have to go to a national level to get involved.

Talk to members of your local religious institution to see how you can get help with charitable functions they are involved with, even if you aren't religious. They often have programs that aim to help feed the hungry, provide families with goods they need, and more. You can also visit any nearby community centers and see if they need help after school and on weekends.

These are all opportunities you need to go out and discover with a little bit of networking as opposed to discovering it online.

If you have any questions regarding volunteering, ask a fellow senior you know is involved, or contact local officials involved in community outreach. Whatever you choose to do, you're sure to feel better once you do it!

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