

# Thinking About Volunteering

## Haas Center for Public Service

There are many ways for you to serve in the community. Volunteer service experiences can provide you with the opportunity to learn about community issues, develop life skills, explore areas of interest, and meet identified community needs.

The information provided below is designed to assist you as you begin the process of exploring potential volunteer options and determining a match.

### Conducting a Self Assessment

Begin with some initial self-assessment, thinking through your motivations, interests, needs and goals. Think through and begin to answer for yourself the following questions:

- Why do you want to do this? What is your purpose in serving and what do you hope to achieve or draw from the experience?
- What would you like to do, in what capacity?
- What do you have an interest or passion for or what would you like to learn more about?
- Whom do you want to serve? What population do you want to work with?
- Where do you want to serve? What community would you like to work in?
- What skills can you offer and/or what skills would you like to develop?

Some Logistical Questions....

When can you do this? How much of a time commitment can you make?  
Are you looking for a short term activity or for something on a regular basis?  
How will you get there?

***“We make a living by what we get, but  
we make a life by what we give.”  
-Winston Churchill***

### Exploring Potential Opportunities

There are many volunteer opportunities available or that can be created. As you begin your exploration process some resources for you to utilize include:

- Student Service Organizations
- Haas Center Yourth & Education Programs
- Service-learning Courses
- Summer Fellowships
- Community Service Work-Study
- Issues & Opportunities Series
- VolunteerMatch.org
- Other Campus Centers & Programs

For more information on these resources and programs, talk with a staff member in the Bing Information & Resource Center (the “BIRC”) on the first floor of the Haas Center.

***Please see reverse.***

## Determining a Match

Once you have identified an opportunity and/or community organization of interest, contact them for more information. When evaluating a possible opportunity, the type of questions you will want to find answers to include:

- ◆ What is the mission and philosophy of the organization?
- ◆ Does the organization have any affiliation (government, religious, etc)?
- ◆ What are the expectations and the specific responsibilities of the volunteer opportunity?
- ◆ What is the range of opportunities available within the organization?
- ◆ What skills or experience are required or preferred?
- ◆ What is the time commitment requested of volunteers? How are hours scheduled?
- ◆ Who will you be serving and how?
- ◆ Does the organization work with other volunteers ?
- ◆ What type of orientation/training and on-going supervision/support is provided?
- ◆ How does the organization relate to the community and how is it received?  
***and ultimately...***
- ◆ Does the opportunity/organization fit with your interests, skills, passion, etc?
- ◆ Are you willing to make a commitment to this organization/opportunity and to the people you will be serving?

## Getting Started

If the organization and opportunity is a match for you, make arrangements with the volunteer coordinator, supervisor, etc. to get started. Request a time to meet and get formally oriented to the organization, the community, the people you will be working with and serving, and to your role and responsibilities. Be sure to clarify expectations in regard to time commitment and assigned duties.

## Making the Most of Your Experience

A good volunteer opportunity should provide an enriching life experience while making an impact in the community. It is easy to have a service experience and miss the meaning. Intentionally build in time to reflect on your experience and to expand and synthesize your learning. Seek out people in the organization or community or other volunteers to dialog with, to ask questions, to share stories, and to help you process your experience and learning.

You may also want to consider soliciting feedback from your supervisor or volunteer coordinator regarding your work performance. This type of feedback can help you grow professionally and personally and may be helpful in developing references for future opportunities or jobs.

**Haas Center for Public Service**  
562 Salvatierra Walk  
Stanford, CA 94305-8620

(650) 723-0992  
<http://haas.stanford.edu>  
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