

VOLUNTEER

Volunteerism in this country is on the rise, and men and women aged 25 to 35 are leading the resurgence. No less reputable a publication than *Business Week* refers to the increase in volunteering among young professionals as a "yuppie backlash against a purely self-centered life." Pretty harsh

"It's very common for people in any field to get into a job and feel kind of empty," offers Adrienne Bell, volunteer coordinator for Big Sisters, Inc. "People feel like there's just something else going on out there, and they'd like to help. People feel they have something else to give."

Yes, there is something else going on out there, and you can be a part of it. To find out more about volunteering in your area, you can contact your local United Way, or

American Red Cross

17th & "D" Streets, NW
Washington, DC 20006 (202) 737-8300
George Else, President

Girl Scouts of America

830 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022 (212) 940-7500
Frances R. Hesselbein, Executive Director

Boy Scouts of America

P.O. Box 61030 Dallas, TX 75261
Jane L. Tarr, Chief Scout Executive

The National Association of Volunteers in Criminal Justice

P.O. Box 1935
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-1935 (205) 348-6738
John Stoeckel, Executive Director

United Cerebral Palsy

66 East 34th Street
New York, NY 10016 (212) 481-6300
Allin W. Proudfoot, Executive Director

United Way of America

701 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314 (703) 836-7100

Association of Junior Leagues

825 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022 (212) 355-4380
Deborah Seidel, Executive Director



words indeed, but they do point to a deeper trend, and a deeper truth.

"Volunteering is a very personal thing," admits Barbara Ann Pitts, director of volunteers for the Volunteers of America. "Many of our volunteers say they want to help other people, and they want to volunteer because of that, but there is this underlying thing which tells me that they really want to find out things about themselves. Many have said they have a handicap in the way they perceive the world and, by jumping in and working in an environment that most people might feel a little anxious about, they're actually overcoming some prejudices they might have, some narrow-mindedness."

To illustrate her point, Pitts cites a young woman her organization assigned to an illiteracy program for alcoholics in New York City's Bowery area. "She has a friend who's an alcoholic," Pitts says of the volunteering young woman, "and she specifically asked to work with a recovering alcoholic. By doing this, by helping someone else, she is really helping herself. And in the long run, she is helping her alcoholic friend. There are a lot of personal needs and some of them are selfish, but that's okay. As long as their hearts are in it and their first priority is to help someone, then everything else will come."

you can write or call VOLUNTEER: The National Center, 1111 North 19th Street (Suite 500), Arlington, VA 22209, (703) 276-0542. VOLUNTEER is affiliated with over 300 regional action centers across the country, and will help you match your interests and time constraints with hundreds of local organizations in desperate need of your interest and your time. (The Mayor's office, in most major cities, is usually equipped to direct inquiries from would-be volunteers to appropriate organizations in its jurisdiction.)

Below, *The American Express Real Life Planner* offers the national addresses of several leading organizations which will put even an hour of your free time to good use:

Literacy Volunteers of America

5795 Widewater Parkway
Syracuse, NY 13215 (315) 445-8000
Joseph Gray, Executive Director

International Voluntary Services, Inc.

1424 16th Street, NW (Suite 204)
Washington, DC 20036 (202) 387-5533
John Rigby, Executive Director

Big Brothers/Big Sisters

230 North 13th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107 (215) 567-2748
David W. Bahlman,
Executive Vice President

Some things to look for when looking to volunteer your time:

- Make sure the time commitment is something you can handle, before you get started. In volunteering, as in other things, you don't want to bite off more than you can chew, particularly when others are depending on your see-through-it-iveness and dedication to a project or program. There is nothing sadder than a pack of cub scouts left mid-season without a den mother to guide them on their way. Know exactly what it is you're getting yourself into, and take on only those commitments that fit comfortably into your schedule.

- Don't limit yourself to horizons you've already conquered. If you're a high school English teacher, don't feel you have to sign on with an adult illiteracy program; if you're an occupational therapist, don't limit your charitable work to organizations helping the handicapped. Your time as a volunteer is a chance for you to grow and meet new challenges, as much as it is a chance for you to help others. You might get more out of the experience if you try something completely different. (On the other hand, your on-the-job expertise may be invaluable to a certain group; you'll have to weigh carefully your needs against the benefits your experience can sometimes bring.)

- Talk with other volunteers in the program before you commit yourself. Many times, an organization can look a lot better on paper, or in theory, than it is in actual practice. You don't want to dig yourself into a hole with a mismanaged organization which misuses your valuable time. Their cause might