

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS | SPREAD THE SPIRIT

PAY IT FORWARD

Gifts and financial donations are certainly welcome this time of year by your local organizations and charitable non-profits. But your time may be the most valuable contribution you can make.

If you're feeling fortunate to be where you are in life this holiday season, why not pay forward a little of yourself? You might just make a difference that people will remember for the rest of their lives.

Studies have shown that more volunteering is needed around the country, especially around the holidays.

Only about one quarter of the American population volunteers through or for an organization, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This statistic has remained largely unchanged over the years, underscoring the need for more volunteers to make themselves available for charitable organizations.

Seek out one of the organizations listed below and get started on impacting your community in a positive way.

#GivingTuesday

With so much attention devoted to Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday, new focus is being paid to Tuesday. #GivingTuesday, that is.

The movement was founded in 2012 by New York's 92nd Street Y in partnership with the United Nations

Foundation. Together, with a team of celebrity influencers and founding partners, the groups launched the #GivingTuesday global initiative that has engaged more than 10,000 organizations worldwide.

Check out the website www.givingtuesday.org to find participating organizations in your area and for ways to get involved.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are many military-focused groups and organizations looking for volunteers this time of year. You can check with your local veterans' associations to help provide volunteer hours during a holiday event.

You also can find volunteer opportunities at your local hospital or nursing home — any kind of facility where people may be spending time away from their home during the holidays due to physical issues.

Many hospitals and nursing homes schedule holiday dances, meals and even trips from Santa Claus for kids in children's hospitals. All of these efforts require a strong force of volunteers to aid in planning and coordinating.

Contact the auxiliary arm of your local hospital to find out their needs and how you can meet them.



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GO CAROLING

A timeless to celebrate the Christmas season, caroling offers a great tradition for spreading holiday cheer.

Pass the Spirit

One of the main benefits to Christmas caroling is the joy you can bring to others with your exuberant display of holiday spirit. Caroling has become a rarity of sorts during the holiday season, giving it even more meaning to people of all ages.

Besides the great feeling you'll receive from caroling, you may also find yourself offered hot chocolate or cookies at the end of your carols. Other thankful neighbors and community members may show their appreciation simply by telling you how much hearing your Christmas songs meant to them.

Group Experience

Through caroling, you will create a group dynamic

and camaraderie that will only add to your love for the holidays. If you haven't caroled before, quiz your friends, family members and acquaintances to see if they know of any such groups. You can also check in with your local cultural and civic centers, since they are often linked up with singing and acting organizations.

Choosing the Carols

When choosing a list of carols to perform, go with the traditional Christmas songs that everyone knows. The main draw to caroling is its ability to bring back nostalgia and goodwill to those around you. So choose like-spirited carols that will leave your audience members smiling.

