

Living 50 Plus in Cottage Grove

Want to volunteer after retiring? Consider these tips:

Many parents feel involving their children in volunteering at an early age can have a profound, long-lasting impact on their kids. But youngsters are not the only ones who can reap great rewards from volunteering, as studies show that men and women at, beyond or approaching retirement age also benefit greatly from volunteer work.

Research from the Corporation for National and Community Service found that more than 20 million older adults contributed in excess of three billion hours of community service time each year from 2011 to 2013. The reasons why older adults volunteer are varied, but in its 2014 survey the AARP's Experience Corps found that 97 percent of its volunteers indicated that their volunteer work with the organization gave them a sense of purpose.

Older adults who want to volunteer but have little or no history with volunteering might not

know where to begin with regard to finding the right opportunity. The right fit can make all the difference for volunteers and the people they help, and the following tips might help older adults as they look for an opportunity that best utilizes their skills and experience.

- Know your schedule. Older adults who are still working but want to volunteer may have a firm grasp on their schedules, but even retirees should not overestimate how much time they have to volunteer. Before you begin to look for an opportunity, write down your commitments and daily schedule, using this list to determine how much free time you have to volunteer. Some opportunities require greater time commitments than others, so make sure you know just how much time you can devote to an opportunity before signing up.

- Give due consideration to your experience. Older adults who have retired or are on the cusp

of retirement have a lifetime of experience they can use to help others. Imparting wisdom learned in your professional life can provide a sense of purpose and even make you feel as though you are still actively involved in the industry where you built your professional reputation. But life experience can also prove invaluable in volunteering opportunities. Mentoring programs give volunteers the chance to help young people, and such opportunities can involve more than just offering professional advice.

- Don't downplay the significance of certain opportunities. Volunteering opportunities come in many variations, and each is significant in its own right. Coaching a grandchild's soccer team can have as significant an impact on the people you help as other volunteering opportunities. Volunteers offer their time because they have a passion to help others, and that help can be given in

a myriad of ways.

- Leave time for the rest of your life. Volunteering is a selfless act, and volunteers are the backbone of many successful charitable organizations. But older men and women should leave time for the rest of their lives as well. Retirement should be fulfilling but also include time for recreation, so don't downplay how important hobbies are to you in an attempt to find more time to volunteer. No retiree wants to grow resentful of his or her volunteer work because it leaves little time for other pursuits, so do your best to balance your charitable endeavors with the other things in life that matter to you.

Finding the right volunteer opportunity can make all the difference for older men and women who want to give back to their communities.

Making time for grandkids can benefit your health

In the not-so-distant past, extended families were the norm, with multiple generations residing on the same street if not in the same house.

Today the family unit is largely an amalgam of different situations. The rise of two-income families has pressured parents into finding childcare situations. Quite often grandparents once again step in to offer guidance and support for youngsters. This can be a good thing for both the grandparents and the grandchildren.

Although a bevy of psychological research focuses on parent-child relationships, new evidence points to the benefits of the grandchild-grandparent relationship as well. Close relationships between these different demographics is often a sign of strong familial ties.

A study from researchers at Boston College discovered that emotionally close ties between grandparents and adult grandchildren reduced depressive symptoms in both groups. Research at the University of Ox-

ford among English children between the ages 11 and 16 found that close grandparent-grandchild relationships were associated with benefits including fewer emotional and behavioral problems and fewer difficulties with peers.

Adult and grandchildren alike benefit from relationships with their elders. Grandparents can provide a connection and exposure to different ideas while providing a link to family history and knowledge regarding traditions and customs not readily

available elsewhere.

Nurturing grandparent-grandchild experiences may be easy for families where grandparents live in the same house or close by. For others, it may take some effort. The following are some ways to facilitate time spent together.

- Schedule regular family reunions or get-togethers. Host or plan multi-generation events that bring the family together and expose children to various members of their family.
- Promote one-on-one time.

Have grandchildren spend time with grandparents in intimate settings. Alone time can be good for both and offers each undivided attention. A meal at a restaurant or time spent doing a puzzle or craft can be interesting to both generations involved.

- Video chat when possible. If distance makes frequent visits challenging, use technology to bridge that gap. Send photos, letters and electronic communications. Tech-savvy grandparents can use Skype or Facetime to stay in touch and speak one-

on-one with their grandchildren.

- Share skills with each other. Either generation can play teacher to the other. Grandparents may have certain skills, such as baking, sewing or wood crafts, they can impart that may not be readily taught today. Children can help grandparents navigate computers, video games or sports activities.

Grandchildren can help grandparents feel younger, and grandchildren can learn new experiences from their grandparents.

Reading

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volunteer force. "And so it creates advocates for the classroom and the school," she said.

And it's clear during the volunteer meeting, advocates are exactly what the volunteers are.

One by one they explain how they came here: some received handwritten letters from coordinators while others wanted to lend a helping hand and came looking for the opportunity. They detail their initial worry over entering a classroom again and uncertainty over how they could help, how Vogel, Strickland and other volunteers guided them through the process and how thankful the teachers were for their time.

"Reading is a top priority at our school, district and state of Oregon for kids," Melendy said. "Research has shown that students who do not read at grade level by third grade are less likely to earn a high school diploma."

Walker, however, has seen the reach span beyond high school. "I tell them they have to learn this so they can go on to college and you just see them perk up. 'College?' Some of them haven't even thought of college," she said.

Retired teacher Cathie Profitt also sees a difference in the kids she volunteers with. "You never get tired of it," she said. "it doesn't get old, seeing that light go on, their posture change. I get goosebumps thinking about it."

Volunteers in the program are assigned to the same classroom Monday through Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and Bohemia is currently looking for more volunteers. Those interested in volunteering or being a substitute volunteer can contact Bohemia Elementary School at (541) 942-3313.

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