



Out-and-About *Socialize!*

Volunteer!

These tips are all about volunteering. Supporting others who are less fortunate is a way to give back, and also provides a social opportunity to connect with other generous and kind-hearted individuals. Working side-by-side, you can strike up meaningful and enjoyable conversations with other volunteers. The people you're helping are often hungry for a chitchat. Reaching out has personal payback for individuals with disabilities!

• **Food Pantry (sometimes called a Food Bank) - *What?***

Food pantries are like a mini grocery store, with a few important differences. A food pantry doesn't have as many items as a large grocery store. Frozen or refrigerated foods might be unavailable in a food pantry. Usually, there a lot of boxed shelf items, such as pasta or rice, as well as canned products such as beans, vegetables and fruit.

Also, items at a food pantry are usually free or deeply discounted. The grocery items are provided to community residents and families that don't have a lot of money that might otherwise be unable to eat healthfully.

How to get involved . . .

Check listings on the Internet to locate a food pantry nearby (search: "food pantry near {your city and state name}"), or call a local United Way office. Staff members at food pantries are looking for helpers to stock cans and boxes on shelves. At some food pantries, volunteers help to take the products off the shelves and put them into grocery bags or baskets. Volunteers are also needed to hand off the bags or baskets of grocery items to people who come to the pantry for help. If you can do some light to moderate lifting and carrying, and have a bright and sunny smile, your local food pantry will be glad to have you help out whenever you can.

• **Soup Kitchen - *What?***

A soup kitchen usually prepares hot meals that are either available at no cost or at a very small price. People who do not have much money or do not have a kitchen to prepare meals can go to a soup kitchen to eat freshly made and nutritious food. Soup kitchens are often found in community centers or are frequently run by members of a church.

How to get involved . . .

Check listings on the Internet to locate a soup kitchen nearby (search: "soup kitchen near {your city and state name}"). Or call the local United Way chapter or a few churches in the area to ask whether they run a soup kitchen or know of one locally. Soup kitchens need all kinds of help. Individuals help plan menus that are nutritious and tasty. Others help serve the meals to people who come to the soup kitchen. Other volunteers hand out drinks; clean up the serving line and the tables; and wash pots, pans, plates and silverware.

• **Meals on Wheels - *What?***

A Meals-on-Wheels program provides food to people that are perhaps sick or older and who cannot leave their home. It is also difficult for these individuals to prepare their own meals. Meals-on-Wheels food is made and packaged for transport in a central kitchen (sometimes at a local hospital or soup kitchen). Volunteers pick up the food and deliver it to those in need. Lunch, dinner and drinks are often provided.



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How to get involved . . .

Check listings on the Internet to locate a Meals-on-Wheels program nearby (search: "Meals on Wheels near {your city and state name}"). Or call a few area hospitals or your local United Way office to ask about the availability of this program. There are lots of ways you can help people who are using Meals-on-Wheels. You can assist with the assembly of the food for transport (cover items, place food into coolers, and carry the meals out to a car or van). Once the food reaches its destination, a volunteer can help deliver the meal to a very happy and hungry customer. Often, these customers are very social and anxious for any conversation. Many a fruitful, long-lasting relationship has been formed between a volunteer with a disability and a Meals-on-Wheels recipient.

• Food Drives - *What?*

Food drives involve collecting a wide variety of donated canned and boxed food items to help those in need; these foods last a long time because they are less perishable than refrigerated or frozen foods. Some of the items collected in a food drive go to local food pantries or food banks.

Grocery stores often sponsor food drives, as do social service organizations and school and church groups. Perhaps you've seen volunteers at a grocery store's front door asking you to purchase a few items on your shopping trip that you will donate to the food drive as you exit the store. Many food drives take place around the holidays, so that people in need can have nutritious and tasty meals for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, and Christmas.

How to get involved . . .

Check with local schools, churches or boy scout groups to ask about any upcoming food drives. You'll probably get some dates and also the type of foods they are looking for. When the weather is nice outside, volunteers may go, in pairs, door-to-door to their neighbors asking for a can or box of food to donate to a specific food drive. In these instances, it helps to have something on paper to represent the organization. Volunteers are also needed to load up cars, vans or trucks with the accumulated donations for delivery to area food pantries.