

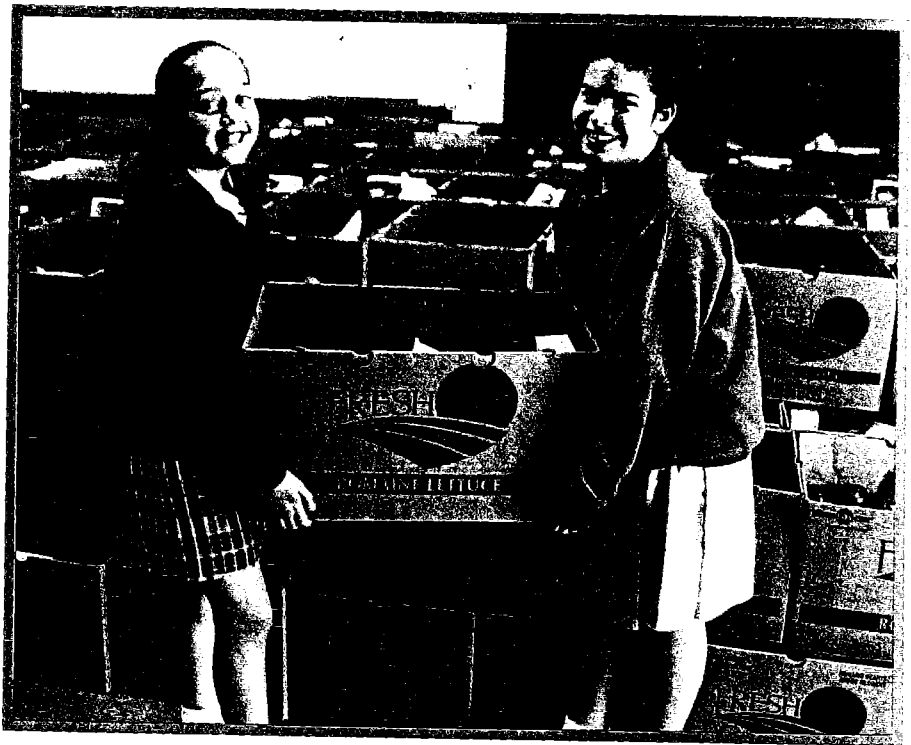
Volunteer Power

Volunteering is a great thing to do. It's a way for you to make a difference in your community, and a chance to take part in a cause you believe in. Some people call this kind of activity "soul food"—it just makes you feel good!

Volunteering is also an important part of a resume. You may not be able to find paid work in an area that interests you, but many companies will be willing to let you do unpaid volunteer work. Later, when you are looking for paid work, employers will be impressed by this kind of experience.

Being a **volunteer** is a great way to meet new people, find out about a career you might enjoy, make a difference in someone else's life, and boost your confidence. It's a good way to participate in the adult world and develop career and social skills that will be useful to you now and in the future.

volunteer: a person who does helpful work without pay



There are many opportunities for teens to volunteer in their community.

What Can You Do as a Volunteer?

It's easy! You can help others by shovelling your elderly neighbour's sidewalk, showing movies at a seniors' centre, or organizing a children's party at your community centre. You can help your environment by organizing a litter pick-up day in your neighbourhood.

During the summer, you might want to volunteer for an activity directly relating to a career that interests you. If you want to teach, work with children, or do social work, volunteer at a summer or day camp. You could do some filing or help with other tasks at a radio or television station if that's the kind of career you'd like to follow.

Your Volunteer Potential


You may be wondering, "What do I have to offer?"

You may have a lot of skills that are great for volunteering. Your skills are likely related to work and life activities that you already do, such as fixing bicycles, using a computer, sewing, cooking, or painting.

Your skills may also be related to general life skills. Maybe you are good at getting a group to work together, or you may write or speak well. Maybe you are great with young kids or seniors, or you can explain ideas patiently and clearly, like a mentor.

All of these are examples of important skills that you need to first recognize and then demonstrate when you go looking for volunteer work.

Over to You

1. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper explaining the benefits of volunteering and encouraging other young people to volunteer. 
2. With a partner, compile a list of volunteer opportunities for others in your school. Create a "Volunteer Board" for your classroom and post the opportunities for everyone to see.

Here's a Hint

Find volunteer opportunities by contacting your local volunteer centre. Volunteer centres match volunteers with suitable positions, and can let you know where people might be needed.

Thinking of Volunteering?

1. Identify Your Skills

- a) Think of an important role you have had in school, jobs, sports, or other activities. Write down what you were responsible for, what you accomplished, and the skills you used. Here's an example:

Role: Power skating volunteer coach

Tasks: Taught children skating skills, supervised free-skate times

Accomplishments: Children's skating skills improved, kids had fun

Skills used to achieve this: Experience with the sport, patience, enthusiasm

- b) Think of who you are, as a person. Are you patient? Do you work well with others? Do you enjoy listening to older people reminisce? What life skills do you have that make you good at these things? Make a list of these skills.
- c) Read through these volunteer jobs.
- Visiting with seniors at a seniors' centre
 - Organizing an anti-smoking event
 - Being student council president
 - Editing the school newspaper

- Coaching a younger school team
 - i) Choose one activity and explain why you chose the one you did.
 - ii) List the skills you would need to volunteer for this job.
 - iii) Are there any skills you need to develop for this job? How can you develop these skills?



2. Decide What Matters to You

Decide what is important to you, and what interests you the most. See whether you can volunteer in these areas. Your experience will be enhanced when you work in an area that matters to you.


- a) Is there a certain cause you would like to help with?
- b) What would you like to spend your time doing?

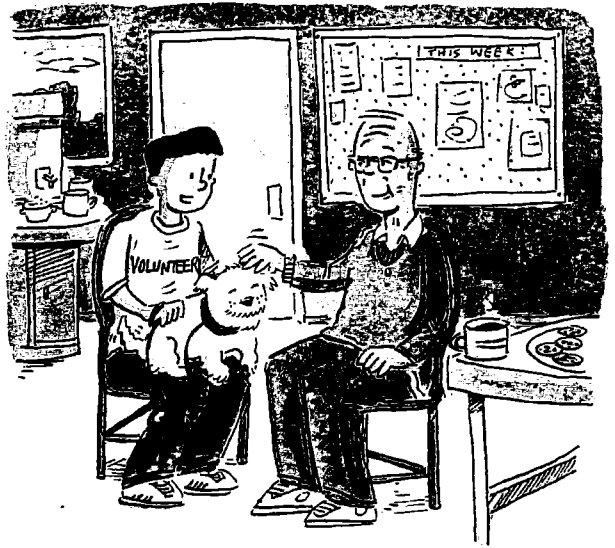
3. Narrow Down Your Volunteer Options

Prioritize the organizations you wish to volunteer for. Some may be looking for volunteers to come in to their office at certain times, or may ask you to make certain commitments.

- a) How much time can you spend on volunteer work? Are you willing to commit to regular times each week, or would a one-time volunteer commitment be better?
- b) Would you rather volunteer alone or in a group?

Over to You

In your notebook, go through the process explained above. Identify your three best volunteer opportunities. 



4. Approach the Organization You Would Like to Volunteer For

- a) Find out more about the organization by looking up their Web site. Look up the contact information for the organization and their Volunteer Coordinator, if they have one.
- b) Think about the questions you'd like to ask them in an interview.
- c) Think about what questions they may ask you, and how you would answer those questions.
- d) Contact them!