

A Giving Community

by Ayla Rose Gilbert

A person might pursue volunteer work for a number of different reasons. Maybe you need to get practical experience to fulfill a requirement for a class, you would like to meet new people, or you want to make a difference in the world. Well, you have come to the right place—Tucson has hundreds of non-profit agencies and charities with which to become involved. So where do I start, you may ask. The Volunteer Center of Southern Arizona is Tucson's prime resource for aiding individuals or companies in their civic service endeavors. You can visit their website at www.volunteersoaz.org or give them a call at 520-881-3300. At any given time, the Center may have around 300 agencies listed, citing about 700 volunteer opportunities. Michele C. Schubert, President & CEO of the Volunteer Center, says that she believes Tucson to be "a very giving community where people are always looking for opportunities to help or give back." Schubert hopes people can start out volunteering once and that they'll be so excited about it they will want to continue volunteering as a regular habit. "When people are involved, it makes for a better community," she says.

Upon moving back to Tucson, avid volunteer Shirley Shobe wanted a way to give back to her home town. She had retired from a very stressful job and suddenly had a lot of time on her hands. Through volunteering, she was able to meet a lot of people and make relationships with others, which has been "very rewarding." Shobe's volunteer opportunity of choice was with Experience Core, which is just one of the many programs listed through the Volunteer Center's website. Volunteers with Experience Core are tutors 55 years or older who work at various elementary schools in the hopes of increasing literacy in children early on in life.

Or maybe you're a new student to the U of A as a Psychology major and you need to get in some volunteer hours to complete credits. You might want to try one of the community behavioral health organizations around town that serve people with substance use problems and mental illnesses. Volunteering with one of the local agencies (CODAC Behavioral Health Services, Inc., COPE Community Services, or La Frontera Center, for example) you can often get hands-on experience with the populations they serve. This can be an eye-opening and valuable lesson out of the classroom.

Whatever your interests, age, or experience level may be, Tucson's volunteer opportunities are vast and diverse.

community information

