

What to Look for When Choosing a Charity to Volunteer For ...

Many people want to help others; they're just not sure how to go about it. Or, they're not sure what they could do. Michael Kenyon, Director of Volunteer and Food Pantry Services at The Sharing Center in Longwood, Florida provided the following thoughts on the subject.

1. Look for something that you have a calling for or have the skills to do. This will give you the satisfaction of feeling that your efforts are helpful to the organization. There's no enjoyment in doing something that you don't like.
2. Look for a charity that has that warm feeling of friendship and fellowship. Speak with some of the other volunteers. Make sure someone will mentor you while you become acclimated.
3. Look for a position that will utilize the skills you already have. If you have plumbing or office or medical skills, then put them to work where they'll help others. This will make your transition much easier than trying to do something you're unaccustomed to.
4. Look for a charity that will allow you to learn and grow as a person. Be open to trying new things. This will keep you interested in what you're doing. It will keep you engaged and wanting to volunteer instead of doing the same old thing.
5. If you're a people person, look for something that will involve working with and helping people. If you're an animal person, look at working with animals. If you're religious, look for an outreach your church, synagogue or temple is involved in.
6. Make sure the hours you would work are conducive to your lifestyle and family. If you're NOT a morning person, then volunteer in the afternoons or evenings. If having dinner with your family each night is important then make sure your volunteer hours don't conflict with that.
7. If possible, work with a local charity or chapter of a charity that you have contributed to financially. This affords you the opportunity to see, first hand, how your contribution helps others. It's important to know that your efforts actually bring results.
8. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Everyone knows you're a volunteer and that you're new; they'll help you. After all, that's what charities do, they help others.

About The Sharing Center - For over 20 years, The Sharing Center has worked to prevent homelessness by helping children & families with critical needs during financial emergencies caused by job loss and health problems. Michael Kenyon has worked in the non-profit arena for over 12 years, the last three at The Sharing Center.