

FINDING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Working with a nonprofit organization to volunteer takes some preparation. Make sure you have the best experience possible and do so as effectively as you can by working WITH the agency not creating more work for them. Remember that agencies first priority is to serve their mission. Help them serve that mission properly by being a good volunteer.

FINDING THE PERFECT FIT

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you begin to consider working in community service projects and placements. These questions could form the basis of your volunteer interviews.

TIME CONSIDERATIONS

- How much free time do you have available to do community service or social justice work?
- How many hours a week would you like to be involved?
- How much of a commitment are you willing to make? How many months are you able to commit to a volunteer job?
- Can you follow through with your commitment? This is a quality that agencies look for in volunteers.

SKILLS, INTERESTS & EXPERIENCE

- What are you passionate about? How do you feel you can make a contribution to the community and, very importantly, to yourself?
- Have you done community service work before? What did you like/dislike about it? Do you want to do something similar again?
- Do you have any hobbies, interests, or paid work experience that you could use in your job?
- Are there career skills or experience you would like to develop through your community work?

JOB SETTING

- Do you have a geographic preference? How far are you willing to travel to do volunteer work? How would you get there? Do you have access to transportation?
- What kind of atmosphere would you like to work in? Quiet? Fast-paced?
- Do you want to work inside or outside?
- Do you want to work independently or with others in a team effort?

FOCUS

- What age group do you want to work with? Infants, children, teenagers, adults, the elderly?
- Do you want to work with a community action or social justice program, a school or educational program? Would you like to work with recent immigrants? Would you want to work in a program that addresses physical, mental or emotional disabilities?
- Do you want to work one-on-one or with a group of people?

PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Do I know someone who could provide a reference for me if I need one? Have I asked that individual in advance so they will know that they may be contacted?
- If I am under the age of 21, do I understand that there may be certain volunteer opportunities that have minimum age limits for which I do not qualify?

-Provided by Smith College