



VOCATIONAL SERVICE



BECOMING AN OFFICIAL ROTARY VOLUNTEER

One reason people become Rotarians is because Rotary provides us with opportunities for meaningful service. The key is to find the project that best suits your particular vision, abilities and circumstances.

Volunteer to serve your club: Your club president and board of directors will be happy to advise you of opportunities to assist your club. Examples of service to your club might be volunteering to serve on specific committees, writing cards to Rotarians who are ill or hosting a fellowship get-together.

Volunteer to serve your community: Talk to your club's Community Service chairperson about projects that your club is planning for your community and see how you can participate. Also, speak to your Vocational Service chairperson about what non-Rotary projects might be able to benefit from your skills. You might be valuable to organizations looking for volunteers willing to procure resources for the needy, build homes, mentor children, provide respite for families of hospice patients or teach adults to read.

Volunteer to serve internationally: The best way to start the process of become an international volunteer is to submit the International Volunteer Personal Registration Form. This is a 4-page form that can be downloaded from the RI web site at:

<http://www.rotary.org/programs/volunteers/resources/reference.html>.

It asks specific things that will help determine which projects might be a good match for you, including skills, fluency in languages and length of time you might be able to serve. Length of service can vary from 1 week to a year or more. Do not be shy about listing abilities that may not be a part of your professional repertoire. Excellent examples of this are some Rotarians from the Espanola club. Sondra Cantrell is a real estate appraiser but volunteered to cook for medical teams in Latin America. Bob Gossard, who is the CFO at a local bank, used his organizational skills to provide order to a busy medical/ surgical clinic. Ivan Guillen used his language skills to translate for a medical team in Guatemala and also used his professional skills as a city projects planner to assess the plans for a water project for some villages.

The volunteer application will be sent to RI, where your information will become part of the 95-page publication of Official Rotary Volunteers for the next two-year period. This publication can also be found at the same web site listed above. This is where clubs needing volunteers will go to find appropriate individuals to assist them with their projects. For example, by browsing through the publication, the Rio Rancho and Espanola clubs were able to find an electrical engineer from a club in Guatemala City to assist them with their joint project to repair the electrical system in a hospital in rural Guatemala. This is where projects needing volunteers can find out about you.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERING – THE LOGISTICS

So, you have decided you would like to volunteer your time on an international project. What is the next step?

Register: The new RI rules state you must fill out the Official Rotary Registration Form and submit it to the persons indicated on the form. This can be downloaded from <http://www.rotary.org/programs/volunteers/resources/reference.html>. Read the Rotary Volunteers Handbook, also found on the RI site under a word search for international volunteers.

Identify a Project: Explore projects that clubs in your district may be doing and see whether your interests match their needs. Another great place to find projects is on the Rotary Volunteers International Site List at <http://www.rotary.org/newsroom/downloadcenter/pdfs/279en.pdf>. This is where Rotary clubs from around the world advertise for volunteers. It will give a brief description of the project, the requirements, approximate length of project and contact information.

Funding for travel: Offsetting some of the cost of your travel expenses is sometimes possible through an RI Individual Travel Grant. It is recommended that you apply 4-6 months in advance of your travel date. You must be listed as an Official Rotary Volunteer to qualify.

Tips from Experienced Rotary Volunteers:

- 1- *Establish clear communications.* Communicate with the host Rotary club project coordinator. Exchange contact information as well as information about your skills and qualifications.
- 2- *Have a clear understanding of the volunteer assignment.* Be informed about the dates of service, working conditions, and tasks to be accomplished. Work closely with the community; discuss their expectations and goals for the project.
- 3- *Arrange living and travel accommodations.* Your project coordinator may or may not provide living arrangements or travel from airport to destination. Confirm all arrangements before arriving in the country.
- 4- *Research materials the project site may need.* Find out what type of equipment the project site has and whether or not it is in working condition. Be aware of all customs regulations before carrying goods into a country.
- 5- *Be acquainted with the project country.* Read about the country's history, politics, economics, culture and customs, climate, etc. Take a language course for travelers, if necessary. Also, communicate with other who have either volunteered for similar projects or in the same country.
- 6- *Volunteers should anticipate the possibility of the following when traveling to a foreign country:* Culture shock, extreme poverty, language barriers, administrative red tape, inadequate water supplies, lack or deteriorating equipment, poor or nonexistent telephone service, difficult in-country travel and extreme weather conditions.

Adequately planning and being flexible could minimize these unexpected surprises and frustrations. However challenging, volunteering gives you the chance to touch the lives of others and makes a

difference in the world. As one Rotary Volunteer put it, “The experience has certainly been one of the best and most life changing that I have ever experienced”.

FINDING VOLUNTEERS FOR PROJECTS

With the increased interest in community and international projects, many clubs in our district may be wondering where they might find the volunteers with the expertise to work on the projects. For example, your club may be considering a project to build a basketball and volleyball court in Lithuania, install a water system in Mexico, construct a school and library in China or even a project to teach kids seamanship in St. Vincent’s and The Grenadines. You may find, as many do, that you do not have an able and willing person within your own club to do this. So where do you go to find this person?

I would suggest that you begin by identifying people within your own community. If you do not find the volunteer you are seeking, then contact other clubs in the district about the need for volunteers. You should also become acquainted with the exceptional volunteer program that Rotary International already has in place. RI has a directory of volunteers from around the world that may be well suited to assist you with your project. This impressive 95-page list of registered Rotary volunteers may be downloaded from the RI web site at www.rotary.org/programs/volunteers/resources/refrences.html. In the listing you will find volunteers with a broad array of skills, such as accountants, animal nutrition specialists, dentists, water treatment specialists, early childhood specialists, teachers, electricians, construction contractors, business administrators and much, much more.

In the event you do not find a volunteer with the skills you need, you may register your project to be put on the list of projects needing volunteers. You may download the registration forms from the Rotary web site. Be aware that there are separate applications for domestic and international project sites. These can be seen at the same web site given above. While you are on the same Rotary web site, download The Rotary Volunteer Handbook as well. It is a valuable publication that will guide you in how to contact, interact and coordinate with potential volunteers and can direct you in potentially obtaining funds for the volunteer during their term of service to your club.

For more information on volunteers, please do not hesitate to contact Rotary District 5520 Volunteer Coordinator:

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