

CHENNAI VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer for positive exchange

Volunteering time, effort and resources for a cause is intrinsic for the welfare of the human ecosystem. Often, volunteerism is taken as an act of 'charity' towards a less fortunate person. In fact, when you give yourself to an effort without expecting any monetary benefit, you get much more in terms of personal growth and learning.

THE TRUE MEANING OF VOLUNTEERISM

Instead of considering volunteering as something that you do for people who are not as fortunate as yourself, begin to think of it as an exchange

Consider that most people find themselves in need at some point in their lives. Today you maybe the person with the ability to help, but tomorrow you may be the recipient of someone else's volunteered effort. Even now you might be on both sides of the service cycle: Maybe you are a volunteer tutor for someone who cannot read, and just last month the Exnora volunteers cleaned up your neighborhood. Volunteering also includes 'self-help'. So if you are active in your neighborhood crime watch, your home gets protected even as you protect your neighbors' homes. When you add your effort to the work of others, everyone's life gets better.

YOUR SPIRIT EXPANDS

You are at the pinnacle of your growth curve when you realize that you want to go beyond your own needs to the needs of the society, the country and the Earth. Different people have different motivations before they volunteer.

Varun Rangarajan, a software professional, opted for social volunteering because he wanted to give back to society in gratitude, a part of the benefits he had derived from it. In 2004, he brought together some like-minded friends and setup an NGO Dream India, to teach under-privileged children.

Says Varun, "One Sunday afternoon, we were playing with some wonderful children from a nearby slum. This initial tryst led to regular weekend study sessions with the children. We took them out to various places from time to time. Suddenly, the weekends seemed the most important part of the week. I was earning well at work and was happy; but by doing such activities, I experienced pure joy. We had a positive influence on children; we ensured that they did not develop bad habits and that they went to school regularly".

Today Dream India has more than 50 active volunteers from all walks of life volunteering to teach under privileged children across the country. One of them is Jamuna Rangachari from Mumbai. "Three years ago I was teaching spoken English to a group of girls from the slum. I had to discontinue this when I moved to another area. However I am still in touch with the girls and am gratified to see them bloom into confident young adults," says Jamuna.

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Divya Rolla, a Yoga teacher says, “I was looking for an avenue to teach Yoga to people who really needed it. I got the chance through the NGO, Nalandaway, and I started teaching Yoga to the young girls at the Kilpauk Juvenile Centre for Girls in Chennai. My experience has been very satisfying; I teach, but I feel that I have much more to learn from those I teach.

”Divya also volunteers with Chennai Volunteers, an agency that acts as a bridge between NGOs and individuals looking for opportunities to volunteer. Several people with varying skill sets have signed up with Chennai Volunteers. There are various requirements-from teaching Yoga to painting walls at an orphanage-for which the volunteers can devote as little as an hour a week.

VOLUNTEERING BY STUDENTS

There Centre forms in Indian education with the introduction of CCE, has made social work an essential part of school curriculum. “This augurs well for children, as they would grow up to be more balanced and sensitive as adults,” says Divya.

Says Malathi Rao, mother of Shreya Rao (a class IX student from Bengaluru), “My daughter’s school, Sri Kumaran Children’s Home, has integrated the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme in their CCE. My daughter and her group of friends enthusiastically went from door to door taking pledges for a plastic-free life style. They also sold cloth bags made by rural women, and gave them back the proceeds of the sale. This was a win-win situation for everyone. The children got their grades along with a sense of pride by being socially productive; the rural women could sell their products without any intermediaries; and the buyers of the bags could purchase good quality cloth bags at a very reasonable price at their door step.

CITIZEN VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Greenagers from IIT, Roorkee is an association of young, green minds who are reaching out to other youngsters through social media networks. They have a slew of creative projects, like making people ‘Green Magnets’ who will practice and motivate others in the greening/cleaning of their immediate environment; the ‘Greenda Cafe’ drives where green practices are introduced (eg: using eco-friendly plates and disposal of waste mechanisms); trips to green spots and industries near their campus. Find Greenagers on Facebook.

Chennai Adoption Drive is a group of passionate people working to increase public awareness about Indian strays. With an aim to reduce the stray dog population,they organize monthly adoption drives for Indian puppies and educate the public about animal birth control. The members of this group are animal lovers who rescue trays and abandoned pups, nursing them till they are fit for adoption. Find them on Facebook.

Chennai Volunteers is an online platform to connect volunteers to NGOs. Find them on Facebook to find the best-suited volunteering activity at a convenient time and location, for you and your friends