NEIGHBOR VOLUNTEER OFFICE
Volunteerism: The Spirit of Fort Lauderdale

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Our Pledge to You

The volunteer opportunity must be a meaningful, satisfying experience and build community.

How does the City define a "volunteer"?

A "volunteer" is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the City. They provide the goods or services of their own free will or assist in order to comply with community service requirements mandated by a court or institution of learning.

"Regular-service volunteer" means a person engaged in specific voluntary service activities on an ongoing or continual basis. "Occasional service or Event" volunteer means a person who provides a one time or occasional voluntary service. There are three distinct roles a volunteer can serve:

• Oftentimes volunteers serve in a specific department to enhance the quality of services in City government. The City welcomes the contribution of varied skills and talents of individuals and/or groups to add support to City departments and expand services to the public. This type of volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by the City prior to performance of any task, and shall not be considered employee of the City.

• The City aims to strengthen and enhance vibrant, growing networks of public/private partnerships made up by engaged business leaders, civic associations, and neighbors. Volunteers routinely work together in service to address pressing issues in our communities and on a series of priority initiatives. Volunteers engaged in this capacity do not have to undergo back ground checks unless specifically required.

• The City proudly puts on dozens of events throughout the year and volunteers are serving in a variety of capacities. No back ground check is required.

What is the difference between a volunteer and an intern?

An intern is a very specific type of volunteer. Interns are looking to gain hands on experience in their field of interest and have a specific career related goal in mind.

What are some tips to help get me started as a volunteer?

A recent poll by the Orlando parade confirms that 90% of Americans believe that it is "important to be personally involved in supporting a cause we believe in" in their communities.

The City is running a series of "Getting to Know Yourself" workshops that allow you to identify your passion and figure out how to find or even create the right volunteer opportunity for you. To get clarity, ask yourself:
- What are you passionate about?
For example, do I want…
- …to make it better around where I live
- …to meet people who are different from me
- …to try something new
- …to do something with my spare time
- …to see a different way of life and new places
- …to have a go at the type of work I might want to do as a full-time job
- …to do more with my interests and hobbies
- …to do something I'm good at

There are numerous volunteer opportunities available. The key is to find a volunteer position that you would enjoy and are capable of doing. It's also important to make sure that your commitment matches the organization's needs. The following questions can help you narrow your options:

- Would you like to work with people or would you rather work in solitude?
- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?
- Are you better behind the scenes or do you prefer to take a more visible role?
- How much time are you willing to commit?
- How much responsibility are you ready to take on?
- What skills can you bring a volunteer job?
- What causes are important to you?

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If you are still unsure about what volunteer position is right for you, call the Neighbor Volunteer Office at 954.828.8658 or e-mail NeighborVolunteerOffice@fortlauderdale.gov We will do our best to find you a rewarding place to volunteer.

Is volunteering a two-way street?

Our Pledge

The volunteer opportunity must be a meaningful, satisfying experience and build community.

Therefore volunteering is a two-way street. Not only do the recipients of your voluntary action benefit, but so do you, the volunteers. Volunteering provides a satisfying outlet for your talents, ambitions, and concerns in ways that are different from your daily responsibilities and make a difference in your community.

What are some of the benefits of volunteering?

There are many reasons to volunteer and even more rewards. Besides the meaningful impact in the City of Fort Lauderdale, volunteering has many personal benefits:

- Volunteering connects you to others.
- Volunteering is good for your mind and body.
- Volunteering brings fun and fulfillment to your life.
- Volunteering can advance your career.
- The happiness effect helping others kindles happiness.

Do I need to be a City of Fort Lauderdale resident to volunteer for the City of Fort Lauderdale?

No. The City of Fort Lauderdale welcomes any volunteer from anywhere to make Fort Lauderdale a better place to live, work , play and raise our children.

I reside in another state for a few months each year. Can I still volunteer during the months I am here?

Yes. Just indicate this on your application and we will contact you, when you are here.

Is there an age requirement to volunteer?

Volunteers need to be at least 15 years of age (subject to child labor laws). However, the City is creating family friendly volunteer opportunities, but parental or authorized adult supervision is always required.

Can we volunteer as a family?

Yes. The City is always looking to create family friendly volunteer opportunities,

While it might be a challenge to coordinate everyone's schedules, volunteering as a family has many worthwhile benefits. Children watch everything you do. By giving back to the community, you show them firsthand how volunteering makes a difference and how good it feels to help others and enact change.

I work during the day. Do you have a need for volunteers on weekends and in the evenings?

Yes. The City holds several special events throughout the year. Many of these are in the evenings and on weekends and require assistance from volunteers.

Will my volunteer position lead to a job with the City of Fort Lauderdale?

No. As a public agency, the City of Fort Lauderdale (unlike private business) cannot hire people just because they are working as a volunteer.

However, if you're considering a new career, volunteering can help you get experience in your area of interest and meet people in the field. Even if you're not planning on changing careers,

volunteering gives you the opportunity to practice important skills used in the workplace, such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, project planning, task management, and organization. You might feel more comfortable stretching your wings at work once you've honed these skills in a volunteer position first.

Volunteering can provide career experience

Volunteering offers you the chance to try out a new career without making a long-term commitment. It is also a great way to gain experience in a new field. In some fields, you can volunteer directly at an organization that does the kind of work you're interested in. Your volunteer work might also expose you to professional organizations or internships that could be of benefit to your career.

Volunteering can teach you valuable job skills

Just because volunteer work is unpaid does not mean the skills you learn are basic. Many volunteering opportunities provide extensive training. Volunteering can also help you build upon skills you already have and use them to benefit the greater community. For instance, if you hold a successful sales position, you raise awareness for your favorite cause as a volunteer advocate, while further developing and improving your public speaking, communication, and marketing skills.

For current job openings in the City of Fort Lauderdale see the Human Resources Department page, http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/jobs/jobs.htm

What types of screening practices are in place?

It is the pledge of The Fort Lauderdale Neighbor Volunteer office that the volunteer opportunity must be a meaningful and mutually satisfying experience, and build community. Each volunteer is given the opportunity and flexibility to volunteer at any given time during an event, in a specific department and at special programs dealing with the elderly or youth. To ensure this flexibility, the NVO requires that every regular-service volunteer undergoes Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint criminal investigation checks through the Volunteer & Employee Criminal History System (VECHS).

"Occasional Service or Event" volunteer who provide a one time or occasional voluntary service not dealing with the elderly or youth do not need to undergo a background check.

What happens after I apply to be a volunteer?

These are the basic requirements and procedures:

1. Application: As a potential volunteer, you will need to provide a photo I.D., and complete this Application and the Liability Waiver contained within. Applicants under the age of 18 must have written consent of a parent to guardian prior to volunteering.

2. Personal Interview: Upon review of your application, the Neighbor Volunteer Office will interview you regarding your skills, qualifications, interest and goals.

3. Background Screening: In an effort to ensure the safety of City residents, employees and volunteers, the City of Fort Lauderdale requires that every volunteer undergoes a background check.

4. Orientation: There will be a monthly "Getting to Know Yourself" class to match your strengths, interests and passion with a volunteer opportunity that is meaningful to you.

5. Placement: In order to assure a mutually satisfying experience, an interview will be set up with the chosen department liaison to further discuss the volunteer duties, code of conduct and department's function. When an agreement is reached between you and the department, a placement can be made.

6. Once the paperwork and background check is complete, a badge and parking pass (if required) will be issued and you will be notified of the assignment details. A mandatory time sheet is used to track volunteer hours.

Will I be trained for a volunteer position?

Staff from the department in which you are volunteering will be responsible for training you for your assignment. Many times, training occurs on the job. Staff will be available to answer any of your questions.

How many hours will I be expected to volunteer?

There is no limit on how many hours a volunteer can serve. Time commitment and schedule depends upon the volunteer position you are interested in. Generally, interns volunteer between 8 and 10 hours per week. Volunteers in other positions vary greatly; some volunteer only a few hours per month while others volunteer as many as 20 hours per week. When and how long a volunteer works should be agreed upon by the volunteer and his/her supervisor.

May I volunteer for multiple departments?

Absolutely! You are allowed to accept as much responsibility as you can successfully manage.

Is there a dress code?

Volunteers are expected to dress neatly in clothes suitable for the job they are performing. If there is a specific dress code for the volunteer assignment, the volunteer will be notified.

What insurance is needed to volunteer?

The City is self-insured for Workers' Compensation, and volunteers are eligible for medical expenses only. (Volunteers are encouraged to consult with their own insurance agents regarding the extension of their personal insurance to include volunteer work.)   Specific information regarding Workers' Compensation is available from the Human Resources Department.

I have limited mobility - Can I still volunteer?

Whether due to a lack of transportation, time constraints, a disability or other reasons, many people prefer to volunteer via phone or computer. There are many projects where you can help. Writing and graphic design lends itself to working at home, and in today's digital age many organizations might also need help with email and websites.

If you think home-based volunteering might be right for you, contact organizations you like and ask what some of the possibilities might be. Some volunteer organizations may require you to attend an initial training or periodical meetings. You also want to make sure that you are getting enough social contact, and that the organization is available to support you should you have questions.

Does the City pay for mileage, food, parking or miscellaneous expenditures?

No. The City attempts to make arrangements for free parking, but cannot guarantee that it is available. However, check with your tax expert, because there are a number of tax benefits available to volunteers. In preparing their tax returns, volunteers may deduct non-reimbursable

out of pocket expenses directly related to their volunteer services if they itemize deductions. Examples of types of expenditures include:

- Bus or cab transportation
- Parking costs, toll fees
- Telephone bills
- Supplies purchased to perform volunteer duties
- Automobile mileage and expenses for gas
- Any other non-reimbursable out of pocket expense related to volunteer duties

For more information on how you can *get involved,* please visit the City of Fort Lauderdale Neighbor Support Office in City Hall at 100 North Andrews Ave, 5th Floor, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 or call 954 828-8658.