

The Spartan • March 10, 2021 • <https://thespartan.org/2427/showcase/giving-back-while-staying-safe-volunteering-opportunities-of-all-covid-comfort-levels/>

# Giving Back While Staying Safe: Volunteering Opportunities of All COVID Comfort Levels

**Marynn Krull, Editor-in-Chief**

If you've checked the news recently, it's likely your feed is flooded with pandemic updates, political tension, ever-impending climate change updates, and natural disasters. In a world where everything seems so dismal and apocalyptic, it's easy to feel insignificant. Sometimes it can feel overwhelming and like there's no way we can truly make a difference. But the truth is, we all have the potential to make an impact and it starts with jumping right in. In the words of the Lorax, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

A poll on The Spartan's Instagram account found that 67% of Doherty students are interested in finding COVID-friendly volunteering opportunities. For many, the roadblock is just finding where to start.

"The easiest way to get started would just be to perform a quick internet search for local events that need volunteers and going forward from there. There may be local groups that commonly volunteer, and joining one or more of these groups can serve as an introduction to volunteering. If there's nothing, another possibility is to just set something up; this could be something as simple as a neighborhood cleanup day or other events," said National Honor Society Officer at Doherty, Erick White.

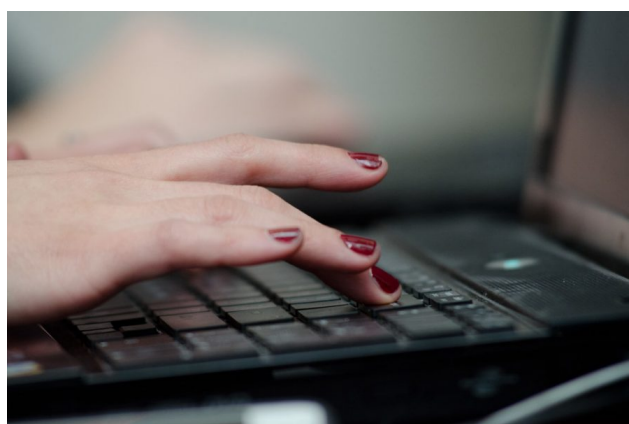
While most opportunities look different this year to follow safety protocols, there are lots of organizations out there for every COVID comfort level who are hurting for help.

"These days everyone's mindful about what would be allowed or what wouldn't be proper with COVID protocols. But the need has never changed—if anything, the need has probably increased—and yet, it's more difficult than ever to fulfill that need," said Scott Crosby, counselor and National Honor Society sponsor at Doherty High School.

Below I've listed a few local and national volunteering opportunities that are accessible for volunteers of any skill level. If none of these spark your interest, talking to your counselor, conducting a quick Google search, or asking around to see what friends are doing are great ways to find entry-level opportunities.

## In-Person Opportunities

The Children's Literacy Center is one of the organizations able to resume in-person activities. Children's Literacy Center tutors help elementary school students who are behind grade-level in reading. "There is always a need for tutors, [but]



Lance Cheung

There are lots of virtual volunteering opportunities available for students.

unfortunately, we typically have more students than tutors and COVID doesn't help the situation as tutors are understandably worried about their health," said Sandy McGraw, Program Manager at the Children's Literacy Center.

McGraw explained the precautions taken to ensure student and tutor safety: "The CLC implemented multiple procedures to ensure the safety of staff, students and tutors. Some of these include tutors are required to wear face shields and students wear face masks. Surfaces and binders are cleaned before/after each session. Everyone is required to have their temperature taken and health questions asked prior to entering the tutoring facility."

Children's Literacy Center tutoring is open to students of all ages and requires brief training on the literacy curriculum. "Volunteering is as easy as 1 - 2 - 3. [It's] one hour, two times a week, for a three-month period," McGraw says. More information about tutoring can be found here. It's a great way to give back to schools and a fun way to spend time with kids in the community.

More Than A Meal is also looking for volunteers to help collect and pass out clothing, food donations, serve breakfast, set-up and break down pass-out tables. They meet every Saturday morning from 7:00-10:00 at Legacy Wesleyan Church to pass out food and donations to the hungry and homeless in the community. More information to sign up for a slot can be found here. The organization does have religious affiliations.

Pikes Peak Habitat for Humanity is still seeking volunteers to work construction on homes. Volunteers ages 12-and-up with a parent or adult can work as restore volunteers Monday through Saturday. Restore volunteer shifts are from 9 AM-1 PM, 1 PM-5 PM, or from 9 AM-5 PM. More information about becoming a restore volunteer can be found here.

Volunteers ages 16-and-up can work at one of two construction sites: Micah's View or Sand Creek. Habitat for Humanity described the work in a statement: "Sand Creek is a PPHFH development in Colorado Springs that will be 30 homes when complete. Expect to get your hands dirty, learn to build, and give back to the community! Join us and make your mark on the construction of a very deserving family's future by building strength, stability, and self-reliance through shelter." Volunteers must watch safety training videos and follow COVID safety protocols, such as social distancing and mask-wearing. Volunteers must be willing to work a shift of at least 4 hours. More information about how to get involved can be found for Micah's View and Sand Creek in the links provided. If you're someone who likes to get their hands dirty, has an interest in construction, or maybe you just to hammer stuff, this is a good place to start.

The Guardians of Palmer Park are still meeting socially-distanced to clean up and restore Palmer Park trails. They meet on the first Saturday of every month, with exceptions for weather conditions, at 8 or 9 AM. More information to sign-up can be found here. If you love the outdoors and have an interest in preserving our environment, this is a great opportunity for you.

#### Virtual Opportunities

Covid Networks just opened a new chapter in Colorado and is looking for more teen volunteers. Covid Networks matches teens with elders in care facilities over Zoom to combat isolation loneliness. Volunteers host game nights, online activities, and meet one-on-one with care facility residents. Currently, Covid Networks is connected with Harvard Square Senior Center and Villiago Senior Living.

"Pointing to my experience with my nana, I know that a lot of the elders we're talking to are not very happy about this situation. Their families follow the rhetoric of 'out of sight out of mind.' So a lot of the elderly are feeling pretty lonely right now because no one is making an effort. That's why our organization is making a difference; we're enabling people to make that effort," said Rhianna Dains, Denver teen and co-president of the Colorado chapter.

"It's a really great entry-level volunteer position and there's lots of room to grow with us because we are a new chapter. We have tons of officer opportunities and tons of volunteer opportunities coming up. We're just looking for the right people to come and spearhead our mission." Volunteers must complete one brief training session. More information to sign-up can be found here. As a volunteer with Covid Networks myself, I'm biased. But it's a fun stress-free commitment that lets you brighten someone else's day.

Tutors for Change is also looking for volunteers 16 and up to continue their mission. Tutors for Change is a virtual volunteering opportunity looking to connect students and tutors one-on-one. "At Tutors For Change, our vision is to create a world free of barriers to receiving a good education by being the world's most comprehensive and accessible

educational resource,” said Tutors for Change in a statement on their website. Tutors for Change has a variety of positions open for educational video development, social media management, state ambassadors, and internal relations representatives. More information to get involved can be found here.

#### Independent Opportunities

On organizing independent volunteering opportunities, Mr. Crosby advises students: “Even if the county health department says that you can’t have 20 or 30 people in the same space doing the same thing, they may say that 3 people spread out a little bit more with proper protection, whether it’s just a mask or a mask and gloves. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses; picking up trash doesn’t require skill, but it does require compassion and dedication to get that project done.”

Independent volunteering projects that work for just about anyone include socially-distanced park cleanups, making care packages for frontline workers, making cloth masks to donate, or collecting food to take to food banks. More often than not, friends will be willing to help out or might know someone else who can. As long as you’re socially-distanced and masked up, working with friends is a great way to make volunteering more productive and more fun.

More personalized ideas depend on what you’re good at. If you enjoy painting or drawing, independent volunteering might look like making cards to deliver to care facilities or hospitals. Or if you bake, volunteering for you could be bringing goodie baskets to places in need or frontline workers. Any interest can become a tool to give back, sometimes you just have to think outside the box. For example, you could host Zoom classes teaching others how to try something you’re good at, like cooking, playing an instrument, or making art.

“If you want to volunteer, you just need to look outside your window and figure out what people need and if you have something you can do to help support them. You just have to be creative and work within the boundaries of covid to remain safe,” said Crosby.