Office of Volunteer Programs

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is OVP?

The Office of Volunteer Programs (OVP) promotes community service through volunteerism. OVP is a part of the Illini Union. Its mission is to enhance and expand meaningful student involvement in community service as well as in public engagement. The goal is to enrich the educational experience for students, faculty and staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign by fostering collaborative relationships and partnerships within the community. OVP connects, supports, and acts a resource for all campus members to get involved in service. Students who wish to volunteer are encouraged to stop by Illini Union room 288, email ovp@illinois.edu or visit www.CUVolunteer.org, a comprehensive Web site for service opportunities, or visit OVP’s website http://union.illinois.edu/ovp/

How can I find out about volunteer opportunities?

OVP provides multiple resources to assist individuals in finding great volunteer opportunities! We strongly encourage students to drop by the office for assistance in finding the best volunteer match to fit their needs. Students can also register on OVP’s weekly Listserv at: https://illinois.edu/gm/subscribe/10051 or look up volunteer opportunities on www.CUVolunteer.org. We also have a great webpage at www.union.illinois.edu/ovp to assist individuals in seeking out further volunteer resource and offerings such as volunteering abroad.

What is the OVP Volunteers Listserv?

The OVP Volunteers Listserv is a weekly email informing students of upcoming volunteer opportunities. It is a great resource to stay informed about local community events as well as programs in need of volunteers! Each week students will receive new and exciting opportunities to become involved in the community through volunteerism and outreach! This e-mail is sent out once a week to ensure that our prospective volunteers receive the information they need to help make the Champaign-Urbana community a better place! These opportunities are not limited to campus, the Listserv will also contain opportunities around campus, and in the CU community. In addition to the weekly emails, you will receive the monthly OVP Newsletter that highlights upcoming programs and offerings from the office.

How do I Sign up for the Listserv?

All you need to do is click here and submit your name and email: https://illinois.edu/gm/subscribe/10051. You will receive a confirmation email once you have been added to the list. This confirmation email will have instructions about how to manage your subscription.

Are there any service based organizations on campus?
Yes, there are over 150 registered student organizations (RSOs) on campus whose primary focus is service! Programs range from mentoring youth to environmental conservation. To find out more about the different RSO service groups you can either drop by the OVP office to pick up a copy of the Service Directory or click on the Service Category link at https://illinois.collegiatelink.net/Organizations.

**What is CUVolunteer.org?**

CUVolunteer.org is a website resource for locating upcoming volunteer opportunities within the Champaign-Urbana community. Hundreds of agencies use this website to advertise volunteer opportunities. You can search for opportunities to fit your specific needs such as your available hours to volunteer or specific areas of interest. This website is easy to use and full of information! All you need to do is log onto www.CUVolunteer.org and click on “find an opportunity” to begin your search. If you need assistance, please feel free to contact OVP at 217-333-7424 or drop by the office.

**Does OVP collect donation items?**

Each year OVP supports three large donation drives, Cans Across the Quad! Food Drive, the Thanksgiving Care Basket Drive, and the Holiday Gift Drive. Each drive distributes collected items to local community agencies to get the items to individuals and families in need. Items for these drives can be dropped off at their designated locations during their collection period each school year.

**Why should I Volunteer?**

Volunteering is a great way to become involved in the larger community while expanding one’s own personal growth and enhancing life experiences. It is a way to promote positive change and improve the quality of life for others. Volunteering can serve many purposes such as becoming actively involved in social causes that matter to you, gaining work experience, exploring future career opportunities and fostering professional relationships, all while helping others and making our community a better place. On top of all of this, service hours are highly recommended for students who are entering the work force, and service organizations can make for great references for your resume!

**What happens after I find a volunteer option?**

Once you have found a place in which you are interested in volunteering for all you need to do is contact the organization to inquire about how you can volunteer. Let them know how you would like to volunteer and when you are available. A person from the organization will work with you towards finalizing all further details such as available service hours, agency guidelines and any further necessary information regarding the specific service need.

**When can I begin volunteering?**

It really depends on the agency in which you are volunteering for. Many agencies can get you signed up quite quickly while others require a rather lengthy process to getting started. For example, some of the agencies will need to conduct a background check on volunteers due to the type of service in which they provide. Other agencies require a specific amount of training hours before you can begin volunteering.
Because of this it is necessary to take under consideration time restraints in which you may have regarding your volunteerism.

**How can I plan a service project?**

There are many different ways to create and plan service projects. The first step is deciding whether you would like to create your own project or become involved in a pre-organized project for which agencies need volunteers. CUVolunteer.org is a great resource for finding upcoming projects for groups. Come to the OVP office for assistance in developing an existing project or coming up with new ideas.

**What is Civic Engagement?**

Civic engagement as individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms—from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement can mean not only a set of actions and efforts, but a feeling of belonging, an experience of investment and ownership in the local, regional, national, and/or international political communities to which citizens belong.

**What is Philanthropy?**

Philanthropy is an effort to increase the well-being of mankind either through charitable aid or donations. Philanthropy can involve individuals, groups, agencies, and/or foundations which give items and funds in support of all types of areas including medical research, social services, the arts, and education.