

News Release

To: Area News Media

From: The ACT Volunteer Center, a Program of DIAL/SELF Youth & Community Services

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National Volunteer Week April 21 - April 27

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world" is a quote attributed to Mahatma Gandhi. It basically means to lead by example...if you want to see change in the world, you must initiate that change. Every community is faced with a number of conditions which may cause sadness within each of us: homelessness, hunger, loneliness, the environment, education, and many more. It may seem an overwhelming task to address any one of these situations, but if each of us lends a hand in some small way great gains can/will be made. Many individuals across the state –and the nation –have done just that.

In 2010, 63.4 million Americans contributed 8.1 billion hours of volunteer service across the country. If these individuals were paid for their services, it would cost the nation's economy \$173 billion. During that same year in Massachusetts, 25.8% of the state's residents participated in some type of volunteer work –contributing 137.5 million hours of service valued at \$3 billion.

So, how do you find the volunteer opportunity which suits your particular interests and availability? The ACT Volunteer Center is the answer. The mission of the ACT Volunteer Center (a program of Dial/Self Youth and Community Services located in Greenfield), is to mobilize people, agencies, and resources to address diverse community needs through meaningful volunteer service. The ACT program has been a centralized site for hundreds of volunteer listings within Franklin and Hampshire Counties since 2007, and serves as a Western MA affiliate of the HandsOn Network/Points of Light Institute.

If you are out of work and have found employment opportunities to be scarce, you can put your free time to good use and volunteer. Volunteer work can enhance your resume with relevant work experience. Volunteers often overlook unpaid work when compiling or updating their resumes. When included, it is often added at the end of the document thereby appearing as an afterthought. Mary Agnes Williams, author of an article on this topic, has found that volunteers are unsure of how to treat unpaid work on a resume. Ms. Williams suggests incorporating the unpaid work with the paid work in the main body of the resume, giving ongoing volunteer service the same weight and importance as paid work. Perhaps your volunteer work will lead to paid employment.

Whether you can offer only a one time volunteer service or if you can offer an on-going commitment, a local not for profit agency is looking for someone with your talents and desire to help others. So, begin to be the change you want to see in your community and volunteer! The ACT Volunteer Center can help you when you go to the website at www.actvolunteercenter.org and begin your search for the opportunity which fits your specific interests, availability and skill sets.

If you would like further assistance, please call the center at 413-774-7054 ext. 119 or email Barbara Abraham, the ACT program coordinator, at babraham@dialself.org.

Dial/Self Youth and Community Services is a community based non-profit agency dedicated to promoting the health and positive development of area youth, and enhancing the quality of life in the communities where they live. Funding for DIAL/SELF includes grants from the US Department of Health & Human Services, the Corporation for National Community Service and donations from private foundations, local businesses and individuals.

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Volunteer stats courtesy of: Massachusetts profile: Volunteering and Civic Life in America - from website: volunteeringinamerica.gov/MA