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Employees have given 2,957 volunteer hours through initiative

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By **SUSAN JONES**

Since March 2020, more than 470 Pitt employees have recorded 2,957 volunteer hours on their timecards as part of the Pitt Pandemic Service Initiative.

Overall, the program has had roughly 800 volunteers, with the rest being students, said Lina Dostilio, associate vice chancellor for Community Engagement.

Right now, the plan is for the initiative to last through June of this year, “at which time we’ll evaluate the need to continue,” Dostilio said.

The volunteer effort, which also includes opportunities to donate to specific causes, has provided help in a variety of ways.

- More than 200 Pitt volunteers assisted a coalition-led effort to vaccinate 2,000 elders in the Hill District and Homewood neighborhoods of Pittsburgh.
- Through the United Way Learning Hubs, K-12 students are paired up with University student volunteers from whom they receive tutoring support while learning from home.
- Pitt joined a coalition of regional organizations on an initiative — Beyond The Laptops — providing needed devices to local families. Pitt gave 599 laptops and donated funds, alongside regional partners, totaling \$150,000 to this effort.
- The University implemented a full-time Community Tech Help Desk, available to the public, offering free computer-related assistance. The help desk team of 30 volunteers has answered 350+ calls and serviced approximately 400 devices to-date.
- Compass Group, Pitt’s on-campus dining service provider, partnered with the Office of Community and Governmental Relations to set up six different food distribution stations across Pittsburgh over three days, during which 5,000 boxes of food were received by

local families.

The idea began when Community and Governmental Relations representatives met with Senior Vice Chancellor Kathy Humphrey to draw up new engagement opportunities once it became clear that Pitt was transitioning to a remote environment last year because of the pandemic.

Dostilio said last year that this initiative came during a time when Humphrey and David DeJong, then-vice chancellor of Human Resources, were looking into ways to strengthen Pitt's community engagement commitments.

As part of the plan, staff can request up to eight hours per week from their work schedule to volunteer.

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