

Seasons of Service: Linking Human Development to Volunteerism Across the Life Span

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Life Stage & Reference	Human Development Characteristics	Implications for Volunteerism	Potential Volunteer Activities Ideas Supplemented by AVS
Infancy: Birth – 2 years (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rapid brain & body growth ▪ Social from birth ▪ Gain awareness of gender ▪ Acquires self recognition ▪ Speaks first words & phrases ▪ Walks around 1 year of age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not conscious of volunteerism (no choice) ▪ Parental socialization ▪ Early exposure to service ▪ Develop belief that helping others is important ▪ Short term activities 	<u>Child as Observer</u> - Parents take their infant children as they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Volunteer for an organization ▪ Help a neighbor, relative, or friend
Childhood: 3-5 years (Woehrle, 1993; Sigelman & Shatter, 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short attention span ▪ Improving coordination ▪ Thought guided by perceptions over logic ▪ Concrete self-concept ▪ Parent-child relations dominant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Short term activities ▪ Active, hands-on activities ▪ Encourage individual creativity ▪ Cooperative focus (non-competitive) ▪ Close supervision (whole family involved) ▪ Success focus (self-esteem) ▪ Emphasize safety 	<u>Child as Assistant</u> - Child helps family members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plant flowers at a local nursing home or for an elderly neighbor ▪ Plant a community garden ▪ Clean a beach ▪ Plant trees
Pre adolescence: 6-11 years (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995)	Motor skills & attention span developing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited to concrete thinking ▪ Much social comparison among peers & others ▪ Enjoys organized games 	Cooperative focus (non-competitive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively engaged ▪ Very structured/organized ▪ Make activity fun ▪ Same-gender groups ▪ Need expert guidance 	<u>Child as Active Participant</u> – Child participates with a class, youth group, or family in a service project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examples as above plus: ▪ Help serve a meal for homeless or home bound people or for the elderly ▪ Play with other children at an orphanage or care center for the disabled ▪ Assemble simple things (ex: metal shelves) ▪ Plant trees in a reforestation project ▪ Perform a skit, play, songs, dances for an orphanage or home for the elderly ▪ Fold, stuff and label envelopes for mailing

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Adolescence: 12 – 19 years (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dramatic growth spurt ▪ Reach sexual maturity ▪ Thinking both concretely & abstractly ▪ Peak peer involvement ▪ Adjustment & confusion about self-identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mixed gender groups ▪ Provide greater responsibility/decision making ▪ Career exploration ▪ Opportunity to learn about themselves ▪ College application/job resumé building ▪ Sensitivity to individual feelings/perceptions 	<u>Youth as Participant/Initiator/Leader</u> – Able to volunteer as individual or to initiate and organize a project with peers or younger youth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct a can-food drive for the local food bank ▪ Serve as a tutor for a young child at school or neighborhood ▪ Conduct a community clean up day ▪ Collect used clothes, toys, eyeglasses frames... ▪ Volunteer as an individual or with a friend or two at a service organization
Young Adulthood: 20-39 years (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peak physical functioning ▪ Excellent mental skills & growth in knowledge ▪ Social networks expand along with romantic relations ▪ Careers & families launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time is limited; focus on quality ▪ Connect volunteerism to work & family (corporate volunteerism, family volunteerism) ▪ Minimal direction (empowerment) ▪ Opportunity to meet others ▪ Connect to personal causes/values 	<u>Young Adult</u> - Take more extensive participation and leadership roles involving all age groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involve one's community organization, municipality, or place of employment in a service project ▪ Be role model to own children ▪ Conduct an after-school program to involve children from the neighborhood ▪ Provide leadership to a group of friends to raise money for a local cause ▪ Encourage one's local place of employment to engage in corporate volunteering
Middle Adulthood: 40-64 years (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Physical decline may begin ▪ Intellectual functioning stabilizes along with personality ▪ Work & relationships dominate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize high degree of expertise ▪ Need to balance work and family ▪ Mentoring younger adults/teens 	<u>Middle Adult</u> - Draw on increased expertise and contacts in volunteering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In addition to above, be role model and encourage one's older children to volunteer ▪ Translate and edit written work ▪ Volunteer in one's profession ▪ Volunteer in one's hobby or recreational sport
Older Adulthood: 65 & older (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reaction time slows ▪ Physical abilities decline ▪ Transition to retirement ▪ Loss of family & significant others ▪ Maintains personality traits with increasing reflection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More disposable time (and often income) ▪ Fill voids in life (caused by retirement, loss of spouse or friends) ▪ Need for self-reflection ▪ Altruism ▪ Be aware of health limitations 	<u>Older Adult</u> - Serve in ways appropriate to increasing physical limitations and problems of mobility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serve as a literacy tutor at the local school or family shelter ▪ Serve as a community advocate for a local senior citizen issue or concern ▪ Engage in intergenerational programs ▪ If homebound, knit sweaters or sew uniforms for an orphanage, do assistance by computer