Giving Back

A Guidebook for
Volunteerism and Community Service

Links Updated - 2018

By
Davidson Institute for Talent Development
Compiled and edited by a committee of Family Consultants
www.DavidsonGifted.org

The mission of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development is to recognize, nurture, and
support profoundly intelligent young people
and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents
to make a positive difference.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Greetings and welcome to the wonderful world of Giving Back!

When my husband Bob and I made the decision to devote our time and energy to philanthropy more than 10 years ago, we had already completed long careers which afforded us a wealth of experience in the business and education sectors. Even with all that experience, starting and managing a nonprofit organization has proven to be one of the most challenging and rewarding ventures we have undertaken.

The Davidson Institute started small in 1999 with only 15 Young Scholars. During the past decade, the Young Scholars program has grown to serve more than 1,700 profoundly gifted young people from all 50 states. Additionally, programs such as the Davidson Fellows scholarship, The Davidson Academy, the Davidson Gifted Database, the Educators Guild, and the THINK Summer Institute have all been added since the founding of the Institute. These programs did not develop overnight, nor did they materialize out of thin air. Each one of our programs took countless hours of research and development, and each is designed to serve a specific need that was communicated to us by the population we are committed to serving. The Davidson Institute would not be what it is today without carefully listening to what the people we serve tell us about their needs.

The same principles apply to you and your work, whatever that might be. While you might not have the benefit of a career's worth of experience to fall back on, you have the passion, intelligence and motivation to make a positive difference. Bob and I know as well as anyone that there is a lot of work involved with setting a philanthropic goal, developing a plan, and then actually executing it. You will need to stay persistent through adversity and focused on your mission while simultaneously remaining open to suggestions for continuous improvement (and there will be plenty of those). "Fixed goals - flexible strategies" is a motto heard often around the Davidson Institute. Most brilliant ideas start very small, but they have one thing in common - they are backed by people just like you who THINK BIG!

You're about to embark on a wonderfully rewarding journey. We wish you luck and great success!

Enjoy the challenge,

Jan Davidson
Co-Founder, Davidson Institute for Talent Development

SECTION ONE: Guidebook Overview & Davidson Young Scholar Ambassadors

1. Guidebook Overview
   - o Purpose and Organization of the Guidebook
   - o What is "Giving Back?"
2. Davidson Young Scholar Ambassador Program
3. Ambassador Testimonials
   - o Colin (12 years old) – Environmental Conservation
   - o Jonathan (17 years old) – Health Care
   - o Anna (14 years old) – Tree Planting & Responsible Development

==========

Guidebook Overview

Purpose and Organization of this Guidebook

Becoming involved in the community and helping others is one of the most rewarding experiences a person can have. Embarking on this journey as a young person not only offers extraordinary learning experiences, but it also provides an amazing sense of satisfaction, not to mention numerous personal and professional growth opportunities. *Giving Back: A Guidebook for Volunteerism and Community Service* is specifically designed to help bright students make an informed decision about how to utilize their talents to make a positive difference.

The information presented in this guidebook is intended to provide you with recommendations, strategies, suggestions and resources to assist you in getting started with your giving back activities. This may include work in the nonprofit, humanitarian, environmental, educational, health care or other sectors. You will find links to external resources throughout the sections of this guide which may be read sequentially or independently. Additionally, Section Five is devoted entirely to additional resources we hope you find useful. This guidebook should be used as an introduction to the experience of giving back for exceptionally bright young people like yourself and a starting point to spark your interest in this exciting activity. While using this guide, keep in mind it is only one resource and not meant to be a comprehensive listing of all possible opportunities or resources. Each person's experience will vary depending on location, interests, goals and other opportunities available to them.

If you have any questions after reading through this guidebook, please feel free to email the Young Scholar Ambassador Program at: YSAP@davidsongifted.org.

What is "Giving Back?"

For the purposes of this guidebook, we will define *giving back* as the act of doing something for the good of a society, a community or subset thereof with no expectation of reimbursement for time, energy or actions. The most common type of giving back is volunteer work or community service conducted through an existing organization whose mission is to provide goods or services needed by a specific population or community. Generally speaking, a giving back type of activity will aim to provide this good or service to members of a community in a not-for-profit setting. Giving back can be thought of as synonymous with the term *philanthropy*, which is broadly defined as activities or efforts to improve the well-being of humankind. The term philanthropy often conjures images of wealthy individuals donating money to a particular cause, but those who donate their time and energy (like you) are philanthropists as well.

As you can see from the broad definitions of these terms, giving back (or philanthropy) can come in many forms, limited only by your imagination. While some people may only be able to dedicate a couple hours a month (or week) to volunteering, this is still an extremely valuable way to contribute, and crucial to keeping nonprofit organizations going. According to Volunteering and Civic Life in America https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla, 62.6 million volunteers dedicated 7.8 billion hours of service to community organizations in 2017! Can you imagine the void that would be created if all those people just stayed home?

Volunteer work is only one way to get involved. Some individuals feel so passionate about a cause that they may take on a leadership role with a larger time commitment (which may include a wage, stipend or other reimbursement). Others may decide to create their very own organization aimed at giving back. This obviously requires a significant commitment and could potentially become a permanent full-time occupation.

Davidson Young Scholar Ambassador Program

The Davidson Young Scholar Ambassador Program is designed to encourage Davidson Young Scholars to plan, implement and maintain their own community service ventures. Once selected for this competitive opportunity, Ambassadors-In-Training participate in an 18-month training process in which they take part in the following expert-led online training seminars:
- Business proposal and goal setting
- Interpersonal communication
- Leadership and ethics
- Philanthropy
- Self-Advocacy
- Public Relations and Media Training
- Fundraising

In addition to these online seminars, Ambassadors are also matched with an advisor who works with them throughout the 18 months of training to assist them in whatever way necessary to ensure the success of their projects. Even with this support system, Ambassadors are not immune to some of the common pitfalls and difficulties in taking their ideas from drawing board to the real world.

Young Scholar Ambassador Testimonials

Young Scholar Ambassadors have taken on some of the most pressing issues we face today, and are doing amazing things with their projects.   The following are a few of their stories – in their own words, about their experiences developing their own successful programs. Hopefully, these testimonials will inspire and help you prepare for what to expect along your journey.

Colin (12 years old) – Environmental Conservation
I found my calling when I was nine years old. As one of fifteen students aged nine to fourteen selected for the first ever *National Geographic Kids' Expedition Team* in 2006, I traveled to the Galapagos Islands, where I spent eight life-changing days on a small boat. During this extraordinary trip, I saw a variety of exotic animals and plants, among them Galapagos penguins, which are funny little birds endemic to the archipelago. However, although I had expected to see hundreds, I saw only five penguins the whole week. Climate change, I discovered, has made tremendous inroads in the Galapagos penguin population, as El Nino weather patterns become more frequent and severe. As our climate situation worsens, the fate of the penguins, tortoises and many other Galapagos species hangs in the balance. After experiencing this unfolding tragedy first-hand, I knew I needed to do something to help. So when I got

back to the U.S., I created The Cool Coventry Club (CCC), an organization that educates people about climate change and energy conservation.

The CCC started out small. My first steps were to participate in several environmental advocacy training sessions, and then to design an action plan, which enumerated several goals and the means to accomplish them. I then created a website for the CCC, and began scheduling tabling events and local presentations, some with expert guest speakers who donated their services. At the same time, I started a national energy-saving "pledge campaign," whereby families pledge to make at least three changes in their energy use. Later, I began working with area businesses to create action plans to reduce their energy use and sell energy-saving products. Eventually, I expanded my work to include advocacy for energy conservation legislation in my state. With the help of a *DoSomething* Plum Grant, I was also able to produce large numbers of publications I'd created about energy conservation for both adult and student audiences. These I distributed at town buildings and businesses, and through schools.

It's been almost three years since the CCC made its debut, and in that time I've held more than fifty events in four states. Some have been small, such as a presentation to a handful of teachers in Rhode Island, but others have garnered audiences of 200 or more. The CCC has name-recognition across New England, and I've even had a global influence, communicating about climate change with people in countries from England to Australia to Vietnam. I'm currently working on a second set of action plan goals, with a focus on the eventual distribution of free educational DVDs I hope to produce for all of my state's public elementary schools.

Looking back, I think the best part of running this project isn't the news coverage (which has been fun), the awards I've won (also fun), or even the looks of astonishment on the faces of legislators when the little kid in glasses starts giving articulate testimony during a legislative session (which is really, *really* fun). The best part is knowing that I've been helpful to people, and to our planet. I've learned that all it takes is a bit of effort, and you can make a huge difference in the world. So when people ask me, "is there anything you would have done differently," my answer is always no. I'm proud of my work, and for anyone considering starting their own community service project to make a difference, I leave you with four simple words that have guided me in my adventures: "The sky's the limit!"

Colin was brave and motivated enough to start his very own organization to raise awareness about the environmental dangers facing the world today. You might follow his lead, and start your very own project, or you might do something similar to Jonathan (below) and become part of an organization already in existence. Either way, you will be making a difference and contributing to a solution.

Jonathan (17 years old) – Health Care
It was another day of classes at UCLA, and all of us pre-meds were hanging out, trying to figure out what to do to fill out our resumes. Getting into med school isn't easy, and we wanted to take advantage of as many opportunities as we could. Half of us were doing volunteer work at UCLA's medical center, the other half doing semi-significant research. While it was satisfying to see these activities on our resumes, it wasn't very satisfying to actually *do* them. Handing out flyers and information on cheap medical resources and emptying Petri dishes just didn't feel... important. It wasn't good enough.

We looked around and into other healthcare projects in the area; I found a startup group that seemed like it was doing something *meaningful*. After some meetings and interviews, I joined up with what became our group – PSCIH: the Pre-Medical Student Consortium for Improving Healthcare.

The doctor we talked with had wanted to start something like the PSCIH for a while and was thrilled to have truly interested pre-meds working in his clinic. As it turns out, the doctor we met was Dr. Jeffery

Kraut, chief of the renal (kidney) department at the hospital; we were assured that there was plenty we could do. We started off with working in the renal appointment clinic. Over the past two years, our group has made a significant, tangible difference in the quality of the healthcare given to our veterans at the Greater Los Angeles and Sepulveda Branches of the Veteran's Association Hospital.

Our achievements include dropping wait times from 2 hours to an average of 30 minutes in clinic, implementing a new, doctor-friendly Epogen monitoring system, as well as setting up a rotation schedule for specialty clinic consults and medication reconciliation duties. Patient's scheduled for vascular access surgery now actually get their surgeries done when they're supposed to – instead of being rescheduled six months later due to missed appointments and bad interdepartmental communication. As our achievements mounted, I began looking into other clinics that might benefit from our work, and as a result, we've expanded out of the kidney clinic and started improvements in cancer, general medicine, and hopefully gynecology, in the near future.

Several of our members have also entered medical school, helped in no small part by hands-on experience as well as recommendation letters from the doctors they've worked with. After all, that was one of the main reasons this project was started. We're working on making it even easier for our members to get into med school by working out deals with Kaplan, the testing agency, to get discounts on their MCAT prep courses.

But of course, making all these changes isn't as easy as it sounds here. Not only were we considered inexperienced and unprepared by some of the senior doctors, but to make some of these changes, we had to worm our way through the hospital's very stringent security policies in order to get access to the computerized patient records system. Getting things done seemed to be something like a Moebus loop; in order for the doctors to trust us to work in their clinic, we need to show them results. We can't show them results until we work in their clinic. They wouldn't let us start until we showed them that we could do something. And it went around and around for a while until we finally worked through it; our perseverance paid off when we finally convinced them to give us a trial period.

Our group doesn't just work; we hold a meeting every other month to discuss our projects and learn more about the state of healthcare nationwide from our Advisory Board. We are constantly working to improve our own program as well as looking for additional ways to expand the scope of the PSCIH.

The work I do through PSCIH isn't simple and mindless. Every week, I spend at least eight hours in the hospital, talking to patients and doctors – learning, working and doing something that actually *makes a difference.* Over these last two years, I've talked to important people, commissioned a program; helped nurses in the dialysis clinic and tracked appointment papers. It's been a very busy, very rewarding, and very satisfying project, and our work will continue, even after I leave for medical school! That is a wonderful feeling.

As evidenced by his narrative, Jonathan has reaped many personal rewards from his involvement with the PSCIH, not to mention all the patients at the VA hospital who have benefitted from a much improved health care system. This is one of the most wonderful things about becoming involved with community service, not only do you get to help others and raise awareness about a cause you feel passionate about, but you also gain valuable experience, meet a network of like-minded individuals and might even be given opportunities for growth that you never expected. As Anna mentions below, the secret to unlocking these great benefits can be summed up in one word: persistence. If you take her advice and work hard, you can accomplish anything you set your mind to.

Anna (14 years old) – Tree Planting & Responsible Development
Young people are often encouraged to work hard and develop the leadership skills necessary to ensure the success of future generations. Likewise as climate change and environmental degradation concerns multiply, corporations, governments and nonprofits are advocating "green" products to foster environmental and cost-effective living. But there are few organizations that combine these two trends to help create a generation of leaders who not only *understand* how to protect the environment, but *take action* to protect it. So why not start such an organization?

My sister and I had been volunteering for years at church, homeschool groups, museums, and even an aquatic center as junior lifeguards. We learned what youth leadership was and what could be done to inspire it. Meanwhile, one of the last pieces of open space in the middle of our virtually treeless town was threatened by a major commercial development proposal. My sister and I searched for a way to get our voices heard in opposition to the destruction of this open space, but there simply were not any existing channels through which to do so. We decided the only way to get our message across was to establish our own nonprofit organization, *The Tree Amigos of Orcutt*. *The Tree Amigos* is a youth tree planting and responsible development leadership organization. Our goals are three fold: 1) to encourage environmental stewardship in our community by planting trees (providing clean air as well as shade and wind barriers); 2) to instruct children on how to be good stewards of the environment and provide them opportunities to take action; and 3) to actively work to preserve the few open spaces left in our town.

Of course, starting a nonprofit was not easy. With the help of our parents, an arborist, and other environmental professionals, we completed our nonprofit registration in six months after hours of research, planning, and trying to raise money. On top of that, we had to formalize a mission statement, goals and other information about what The Tree Amigos stands for. We worked diligently to collect letters of support from influential people in government and the conservation movement as well as garnering the publicity needed to build public support. This was the easy part.

When we began trying to establish branches of the Tree Amigos in our local elementary schools it was an uphill battle. It often took weeks and even months to get responses from interested schools (teachers are way overworked!). Some did not have time for the project, some were unsure about fundraising, and some simply did not respond. We finally found two schools who seriously considered our proposal and we are currently working with them to develop an after school program for their students. Two schools is not much, but it is a great start! Because we were determined and our devotion was obvious, we made real progress in convincing others that the Tree Amigos was here to stay.

We also ran into obstacles in our efforts to halt development and preserve open space. Our plan was to stop the proposed development, raise money to buy the land, and then plant a commemorative tree grove there instead. It was a plan that many local residents and organizations supported. However, we did experience opposition from government and special interest groups. It would have been easy for us to fold under this pressure, but we did not give in. We argued our case passionately, and within six months, the development was stopped!

The secret to any project's success is persistence. First, gain some experience by working with organizations similar to yours, learn how to be a good volunteer, and make some connections that could help you later. Then, when opposition comes (no matter how scary or intimidating it might be), don't let it bother you! If you believe what you are doing is right, there are likely others out there just like you who feel the same way. It is just a matter of finding those individuals and teaming up with them to accomplish your goals. Finally, never be afraid to ask for help. We accepted anyone's help, from friends

our age, to lawyers and other professionals. My advice is simple: don't be shy and work hard. You will be successful!

For every young person engaged in giving back there is a unique reason they decided to do so. Some of the reasons cited by Young Scholar Ambassadors who are devoting much of their free time to their own community service projects are:

- "A feeling of empowerment that I can be involved in the community and do something positive for the world – no matter how young!"
- "To bring joy to senior citizens through live music performances."
- "To help kids overcome reading disabilities and to improve literacy on a societal scale."
- "As a person that has been very fortunate in my life, I feel pain for others who have been less fortunate and want to help them."
- "An opportunity to do something outside of academics, and a chance to develop 'real world' thinking."
- "I get satisfaction and pride while being involved in a community service project. The time I commit and effort I give will be repaid many times over."
- To learn the priceless lessons I need to become a valuable contributor to my community."

Do some of these statements resonate with you? If so, you might just have what it takes to assume the challenging task of leading of your own community service organization!

SECTION TWO: Giving Back

1. Why give back?
   o Benefits of Giving Back
   o Giving Back and gifted kids

2. Common ways to give back
   o Volunteer
   o Start a nonprofit
   o Fundraising
   o Grantwriting
   o Tutoring & Mentoring
   o Other Ideas

==========

Why give back?

City, county, state and federal governments along with private companies are not able to fulfill all the diverse and unique needs of all communities. This leaves a significant number of tasks for other organizations to fulfill while also creating the need for volunteerism and the nonprofit sector. These unfulfilled tasks can include just about anything, from environmental conservation efforts to providing food, shelter, health care or education to those in need. Volunteerism and the nonprofit sector play such a critical role in American society that the Corporation for National and Community Service (the nation's largest grantmaker supporting service and volunteering) has a budget in excess of $1 billion dollars for fiscal year 2010 (http://www.nationalservice.gov/). This means there are more opportunities than ever before for aspiring young volunteers like you. Whatever the pressing needs of a given community might be, engaging in a giving back activity to address these needs is a surefire way to help others, gain valuable "real world" experience, and feel great about yourself in the process.

Benefits of Giving Back

Young people everywhere are working hard to affect positive change in the world. Gifted young people are no exception, many of whom have made significant positive contributions to their communities before they graduate high school. Besides the intentional benefits of doing something that is personally fulfilling and helping others, there are many additional benefits of participating in such activities. These "latent" benefits include bolstering your resume for college admissions (not to mention scholarships or grants to help pay tuition), developing important skills in business, communication, leadership and professional networking. Exciting possibilities for funding, employment and even world travel await those willing to dedicate their time to a worthy cause. According to Miriam Weinstein, author of *Making a Difference: Scholarships for a Better World,* "Your background of consistent community service or activism will make you extra attractive to most colleges and graduate schools." Additionally, the experience and knowledge gained through volunteering and participation in other service-oriented programs will better prepare young people with the skills needed for success in the job market after graduation. Therefore, one need not be the high school valedictorian or varsity athlete to be the recipient of scholarship money and participant in extracurricular opportunities. Contrary to conventional thinking, community service experience is a valuable an asset for the college applicant, even as much as sports and academics.

Giving Back and Gifted Kids

As you probably already know from your own life experience, gifted young people do not fit into any standard mold. Having said this, a number of research studies along with our experience at the Davidson Institute has indicated a common trait among many gifted young people is that they have an extraordinarily high capacity for empathy and a strong desire for justice at an early age (Fielder, 1998; Lovecky, 1994; Piechowski, 1991). This heightened sense of empathy and perceived "right and wrong" can result in a great deal of anxiety, particularly when faced with injustices seen in the media, their communities or their own lives. If this sounds like you, becoming involved in a giving back venture aimed at making a positive difference (whether environmental, humanitarian, educational, etc.) can be an empowering first step toward remedying these issues. Giving back offers concerned individuals a place to start when trying to make a change for the better. Younnis and Yates (1997) have identified community service involvement as benefiting young people by promoting social problem-solving skills and fostering optimism for a better future. This drive to "do the right thing" and make a positive contribution to society is commonly cited as a reason Young Scholars give when asked why they have decided give back.

In addition to satisfying the need to help others or remedy injustices, additional developmental benefits of community service activities have been well documented with empirical research. Furthermore, the idea of "service learning" (incorporating community service into a school curriculum) as a vital component of a well-rounded education has gained momentum in recent years. This led to a great deal of research on the potential benefits of service learning as a pedagogical tool (Andersen, 1998; Conrad & Hedin, 1987; Kenny et al., 2002; Mannes, 2002) which strongly supports this as a positive developmental experience on many levels. While gifted students do have a different learning trajectory when compared to others, benefits such as the development of critical thinking, leadership and problem-solving skills, communication and teamwork experience provided by involvement in community service cannot be overstated.

Common Ways to Give Back

Giving back can be as simple as volunteering a few hours a week at a local organization or as complex as starting your own nonprofit organization. The possibilities are limited only by your own imagination, energy and creativity. This section provides an outline of some of the common ways people give back in communities all over the world. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather an idea-generating tool and place to start for those looking to explore ways to get involved.

Volunteer

What is a volunteer? Volunteers are individuals or groups who give their time, talent, abilities and/or labor to a cause they believe in, without pay. Once you have determined you would like to volunteer, you will need to decide how much time you would like to give. Before you commit, take some time to think about your other responsibilities and how much time you can realistically devote to volunteering. If, after you have conducted this audit of your free time and you decide you would still like to volunteer, you will need to locate an organization to which you will give your time and expertise. This should be based upon your own personal interests and concerns about the needs of your community. Once you have made these preliminary decisions and identified an organization, dig a little deeper. Figure out the structure of the organization and what they expect from volunteers. Do their expectations match yours? Over-committing is easy to do, so it is a good idea to start small with just a few hours and slowly increase your time commitment once you know better what is expected of you and what your schedule will allow.

Even though you will not be getting paid for your time, organizations who welcome volunteers do count on those individuals to be there when they are scheduled. Professional etiquette such as arriving on

time for a shift and giving plenty of notice if you are not able to work when scheduled are responsibilities you assume as a volunteer and are absolutely vital for the smooth operation of the organization (see: Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities later in this Section).

Charity vs. Change
Most programs that utilize volunteers can be characterized as one of two basic models: *charity* or *social change*. Both models usually include service programs that assist communities or individuals who are underserved or labeled as "at-risk."

The *charity* model focuses on meeting an immediate need and generally does not address the underlying social, economic or other root causes of a problem. An example of this is a soup kitchen. A soup kitchen does a wonderful job of feeding hungry people (which may indirectly afford them the time and energy to make the changes necessary to feed themselves). However, the soup kitchen as an organization does not directly address the underlying social or economic factors that cause unemployment and homelessness. The role of charity organizations is somewhat similar to that of a triage center in a hospital, absolutely necessary for some, but no matter how hard or fast they work it will not result in any less demand for their service since they do not address the cause(s) of the demand.

The *social change* model is focused on empowering the recipients of a service to take the steps necessary to create long-term social change, and therefore improve whatever condition it was that caused them to need the help in the first place. For example, an organization focused on decreasing carbon emissions from factories can be thought of as a social change organization because in order to accomplish their mission, they will likely need to focus on educating companies, the government and the public about the detrimental effects of carbon emissions on people's health and the environment. The volunteers at change-based organizations recognize the strengths and resources of the population being served (in this case those running factories) and provide services based on the premise that the people being served will one day no longer utilize their services (once the change has occurred). The goal of the organization mentioned above is to decrease carbon emissions. By educating the factory owners about how decreasing carbon emissions could save them money while benefitting the environment and the health of their workers in the long term, they are empowering the target audience to make the changes necessary to achieve their goals. Also, they may pressure governmental departments like the Environmental Protection Agency to develop legislation to make the current levels of pollution illegal. Volunteers at social change organizations must know how to influence people and make a convincing argument for why the change should occur.

Of course, not everything in life fits neatly into categories, and there are some organizations whose mission bridges the gap between the charity and social change models. Think about what type of organization you would like to be part of and seek them out in your own community.

Please see Section Five for a list of resources which will help you locate volunteer opportunities locally and globally.

Local, National, and Global Levels
Once you have figured out how much of a commitment you are able to make, and the area (environmental, social, etc.) in which you would like to become involved, you can now determine at what level you would like to give back. This is something only you can decide. Would you like to do something locally for your own community? Would you rather become involved in something nationwide in scope? Is the issue you are interested in best addressed on an international or global level?

On the local level, you can give back by volunteering a few hours of your time to a community agency. For example, spending time at your neighborhood Boys and Girls Club or helping clean up local parks and open space. Or, you could help to sort and package food for distribution at a local food bank. The website https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve is a great tool for locating volunteer opportunities near your home!

Nationally there are many ways to contribute as well. Volunteering with a national organization may take you out of your own community and place you into others where services are needed. For example, Habitat for Humanity volunteers travel to impoverished neighborhoods and those that have been destroyed by natural disasters to build homes. With this type of organization, you need to go where homes are needed so the location changes depending on where the need arises. The website https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla provides users with a database of national, state and city opportunities.

Are you interested in becoming involved internationally? Well-known organizations such as the Peace Corps and the United Nations (UN) are constantly seeking volunteers. Because of the wonderful travel experiences provided by such programs, positions with them are usually in high demand and therefore somewhat competitive. Websites like https://globalvolunteers.org/ can help match you up with international volunteer opportunities that best suit your interests. As with all community service, but especially with international positions, there may be minimum age or other eligibility requirements. Be sure to check these eligibility requirements to make sure you are a good candidate before spending your time filling out applications.

In addition to using search engines like those noted above, researching specific non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is a great way to find volunteer opportunities. According to the United Nations, the term NGO loosely means "any non-criminal, not-for profit private organization that is not under the direct control of a governmental entity." This definition is intentionally vague and broad, and encompasses tens of thousands of small organizations all over the world which are engaged in giving back activities.

NGOs have become increasingly influential in recent years with respect to local, national and international issues. They generally focus on issues in the social, economic and political sectors. The proliferation of NGOs in the last couple decades means there are literally tens of thousands of organizations around the world today looking for volunteers. Some work on a very small scale to remedy local issues, while others partner with large global organizations (such as the UN) to address issues international in scope. Since most NGOs operate on a nonprofit basis they actively seek volunteers to help them achieve their goals. Searching an online database such as this NGO Guide is a great way to familiarize yourself with NGOs whose missions align with your own passion for giving back.

Where do I go and what do I say?
Once you have a pretty good idea of what type of organization you would like to volunteer with, the time you are willing to commit, and whether you would like to stay local or do some traveling, it is time to go out and find the position that is right for you! There are several ways go about this, from using Internet search engines or databases like the ones above (and below), to thumbing through the phone book, talking to your teachers, or simply cold calling an organization you've heard good things about. At local colleges and universities there may be ads posted on bulletin boards looking for volunteers; or you could ask friends and relatives if they know of a place looking for some help.

Below are just a few Internet resources you might utilize in your search (additional resources can be found in Section Five of this guidebook):

- Volunteer match: https://www.volunteermatch.org/
- The Network for Good: http://www.networkforgood.org/volunteer/
- Idealist: https://www.idealist.org/

Once you have identified one or more specific organizations you would like to work with, prepare yourself. Many organizations are looking for volunteers to perform specific tasks. Make sure you familiarize yourself with their mission and any available positions before calling. As mentioned previously, some opportunities have age restrictions or other eligibility requirements so be sure to clarify what those are if you cannot find that information on their website before calling. Additionally, you should be ready to answer a few simple questions a volunteer coordinator may ask in an effort to learn more about you and your commitment to volunteering. *Teens Health Volunteering Guide* recommends being prepared to answer the following questions:
- Why do you want to volunteer for our organization?
- What would you like to gain by this experience?
- What do you know about our organization?
- How many hours a week will you be able to volunteer and on which days?
- What are your interests?
- Do you have any special skills?
- Do you have reliable transportation?
- Some places will ask you to come for an interview, which is usually pretty casual — they want to talk to you face to face and if they have not yet asked you questions similar to the ones above, they will likely do it at that time.

As a good rule of thumb, be sure to ask questions of your own. Since volunteering is a two-way street, it is a good idea to think about certain issues ahead of time. Some suggested questions may be:
- What are you looking for in a volunteer?
- What kind of training will I receive?
- What will be my specific volunteer duties?
- How many other volunteers are there?
- How many hours do you expect volunteers to commit each week/month? On which days of the week?
- If it's a good fit — meaning you like the organization, they like you, and you like the work — volunteering can be an incredible experience.

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities
Just because you are volunteering your time and such arrangements can sometimes seem informal, it does not mean these positions do not come with certain basic rights and responsibilities. The hours dedicated by volunteers are absolutely crucial to the success of the organization, and they have a responsibility to provide volunteers with appropriate training and safety considerations. Conversely, as a volunteer you have certain responsibilities to the organization. Here are some basic rights and responsibilities to keep in mind when you are ready to make a commitment:

As a volunteer, you have the *right* to:
- Receive appropriate training to do the job effectively
- Be treated with respect, just like any other staff member
- Have a safe working environment
- Ask for help when you need it

As a volunteer, you have the *responsibility* to:
- Arrive on time and be ready to work your scheduled shift
- Act professionally and treat others with respect
- Notify the volunteer coordinator with ample warning (usually at least 24 hours) if you cannot make it to your shift
- Do your best to help further the mission of the organization or agency
- Take your commitment seriously – your volunteer time is valuable
- Refrain from sharing any confidential information

Remember, your time is valuable and the organization you are volunteering with is important. Mutual respect is crucial to a healthy and happy volunteer experience.

School Programs
Many schools (primarily high schools) have a community service component built into graduation requirements. The person at your school who is responsible for making sure students participate in this service program will have information and resources to help you get started. If your school does not have a required service component, your guidance counselor's office may be a source of useful information about local community service opportunities. They may even have a listing of local organizations and government programs that regularly look for volunteers.

Similarly, some schools incorporate a *service learning* component into their curriculum. When students engage in service learning, it involves more than just arriving, volunteering and leaving. Service learning is a three-part process that begins with preparation and learning (in the classroom) about the particular issue that the service experience will address. Ideally, the volunteer activity is linked to academic subject matter being studied. For example, preparation for a Food Bank volunteering event may involve learning about poverty and the effects of nutrition on healthy development in a biology or health class.

After preparation comes the fun part: the activity! Getting out there with a group of your classmates to apply your classroom learning in action is not only beneficial as a learning experience, but you will also do something good in the community. You will learn new skills and see first-hand what it takes to provide the service. Hopefully, the activity you are participating in will be personally fulfilling and meaningful for you beyond textbook learning experiences.

The third component of service learning is a reflection process. This is usually guided by a teacher or counselor and includes recalling the experience, brainstorming ideas to solve problems and questioning one's own preconceptions and beliefs about the usefulness of the activity. Students might even be asked to write a paper reflecting on their experiences. Additionally, reflection generally involves some planning about future service learning involvement and how to make the experience even better next time.

If you are interested, check with the teachers at your school to see if there is a community service or service learning program seeking student involvement. If not, you can advocate for the development of one.

Start a nonprofit
For some, volunteering is only the first step towards becoming even more involved. Some young people decide they would like to take it to the next level and start their own organization. This is usually most successful when you identify a specific need, but are unable to locate an organization that is directly addressing that need.

Let's start with an example. One day a Davidson Young Scholar realized that people in his neighborhood were discarding old electronics with their household trash. He questioned this, wondering if all those valuable electronics really should end up in a landfill. He did a bit of research which revealed throwing used electronics with all their toxic components into the trash results in pollution of groundwater supplies (if left in a landfill) and the air (if incinerated). He also found most people are unaware of these environmental dangers, not to mention the unnecessary waste of throwing electronics out with the trash. This young man started a community recycling program which provides information for residents of his community on the dangers of e-waste, as well as providing them with a quick and convenient way to recycle their electronics. The community recycling team collects old computers (and other electronics) and refurbishes them to a usable state, which they then donate to organizations such as the local children's hospital. If it is not possible to refurbish an item they collect, they either salvage it for parts or take it to the state drop-off recycling center which separates the parts and sends them to specialized companies that can reuse and recycle them.

As of the spring of 2009, 55 computers, 60 monitors, 25 printers and 20 scanners have been collected by this Young Scholar and his team. More than 20 of those computers and accessories have been refurbished and donated to those in need, while the rest have been properly recycled keeping them out of landfills. And he is just getting started!

This is only one example. Can you think of a product or a service that people in your community (or anywhere in the world) need, but do not have access to? For more information about starting your own organization, please see Section Three.

Fundraising
What is fundraising? Fundraising is the process of procuring money or other gifts from individuals, businesses, or government agencies. Most philanthropic, charitable and social change organizations rely heavily on fundraising and donations to "keep their doors open." Finding creative ways to raise funds for an organization is almost as fun as the actual fundraising activity. Raffles, walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, product sales, charitable dinners and grant writing are just a few of the common ways people and organizations raise money for good causes. Grant writing is discussed in more detail below since this is a major source of funding for many nonprofit organizations.

Grantwriting
Grants are funds allocated for certain purposes. These funds may come from public or private sources. For example, the National Science Foundation might allocate several million dollars to further math and science education. Organizations who have a vested interest in math and science education will then write proposals which outline how they would spend a portion of the funds (to further math and science education) should they receive them. Unlike a loan, if an organization is awarded a grant they do not need to pay it back. As you might think, the supply of these grant monies usually does not meet the demand. Therefore, writing proposals to obtain grants is a very competitive venture.

A grant writer must convince the party providing the funds that their proposal or project is a worthwhile investment. In essence, grant writing is persuasive writing which usually involves collecting historical data to formulate an argument for why a program is needed. For the most part, grants are competitive and many organizations rely heavily on the grant writer's ability to justify why their particular organization or project is the best possible use for the money. Excellent skills in written communication as well as high-level analytical and research expertise are essential qualities of a successful grant writer. If this sounds like you, perhaps you could contact a local nonprofit and ask them if their grant writing staff needs help. One thing to keep in mind is that many organizations might already have one (or more) full time grant writers on staff, so if they do not need your help in that department, propose

another creative fundraising idea. It should also be noted that a grant award need not necessarily involve money. What else could you ask for? Equipment, labor, time, space or an official endorsement are all potential grant awards.

If you find you really enjoy fundraising and/or grant writing, there are career opportunities available in this field. Many nonprofit organizations retain the services of professional fundraisers and grant writers to ensure their inflow of money.

Tutoring & Mentoring

Two really fun and fulfilling ways for bright students like you to give back are through tutoring or mentoring. Tutoring is essentially teaching. There are students everywhere in need of tutors to help them meet their educational goals. By donating your time as a tutor, you can help them reach those goals. Mentoring is slightly different. It usually involves working with a student or group of students outside of a traditional classroom to explore a particular topic of interest in great depth. Mentoring a younger student is an incredible way to share your passion for a particular subject, while also providing a unique learning experience for the mentee.

What is Mentoring?

Webster's Dictionary defines a mentorship as "a formal relationship between a student and a professional adult to further the student's knowledge, skills, or career." Variations of this definition abound and the word "mentor" means different things to different people. The main point is that a mentorship includes guidance or teaching by a knowledgeable individual aimed at furthering a student's understanding and abilities in his or her area of interest. Regardless of the formal definition, a mentorship can take many forms depending on the specific situation or circumstances of the mentor/mentee relationship. Whatever meaning it has for you, the bottom line is that a mentorship is a unique relationship that should enrich the lives of both individuals involved. Do you have a mentor or two of your own? If so, has it been a good experience for you? What makes your mentor a good fit for you? These are all good questions to ask yourself when thinking about becoming a mentor. If you have never had a mentor of your own, the following few paragraphs are designed to help you understand how typical mentoring relationships are structured and help you decide if mentoring could be right for you.

There are essentially two types of mentoring
- Informal - this is what many people think of when they think of mentoring: a spontaneous, casual relationship where a senior person takes a junior person "under his or her wing" and provides long-term guidance.
- Structured - structured mentoring programs are designed to create a culture where people can proactively support the development of one another. In these programs, mentors are matched with mentees to support specific goals of the mentee, often times centered on academic or professional pursuits.

Mentoring can be delivered in many ways:
- One-on-one - a more experienced person mentors a less experienced individual. This usually consists of regularly scheduled meetings that occur on a face-to-face basis. Mentors and mentees can determine the location, time and frequency of meetings based on their needs.

- Group - typically consists of one mentor who works with multiple mentees, usually during a set time. Group mentoring might be structured such that one mentor provides guidance to all "mentees" or so that each of the members of the group then provides mentoring to others in their specific area of interest (peer mentoring).

- Long distance- Typically consists of emailing, phone conversations and other long distance communication methods. As you might imagine, mentors and mentees may have more flexibility with long distance mentoring relationships, but they also lack the regular face to face interaction that one-on-one local mentorships offer. This is sometimes called "telementoring."

A wonderful example of how one ambitious young man has taken on the challenge of providing educational opportunities in math is Johnny, a Young Scholar in Orange County, California. Johnny's love for math developed at an early age when he was exposed to the San Diego Math Circle. As he got older, he realized how much time he was spending commuting from his home to the meetings in San Diego, so he decided to start his own Math Circle closer to home in Orange County. Thanks to Johnny's expertise in Math and passion for giving back, the Orange County Math Circle has grown tremendously in only a couple short years to host math tournaments, provide tutors, organize clubs and so much more. The Orange County Math Circle website is a great place to find links to a number of other math resources as well: http://www.ocmathcircle.org/.

The Davidson Institute's *Mentorships: A Guidebook* has more information about mentoring (note: Mentorships: A Guidebook is written for those looking to be a "mentee" not a mentor. Section Eight of the mentorship guidebook Tips For Mentors provides information that would be useful for a potential mentor like yourself).

Other Ideas
As mentioned in an earlier section of this guidebook, the possibilities for getting involved and giving back are limitless!

If you like…**animals:** Contact your local Humane Society or animal shelter. They are almost always looking for cat or dog companions and people to help with daily operations. Try contacting an aquarium or zoo and see if they could use a volunteer assistant.

If you like…working with **children:** There are many organizations that work with children including day care, family shelters, emergency food pantries, counseling services and hotlines. You could volunteer your time at your local Boys and Girls Club or become an after-school tutor or mentor.

If you like…**arts and culture:** Museums and cultural organizations are constantly looking for volunteers. Your local newspaper or city website probably has a calendar of events which might include opportunities like this. Search for events that have an art or cultural component (such as a festival) and contact them to see if you can help out in any way.

Do you have more than one thing you love, and can't make up your mind? **Combine them!** For example, if you love kids and are also artistic, visit your local children's hospital and offer to lead art activities for young patients. If you love animals and like to be outdoors, call your local animal shelter and inquire about becoming a dog walker.

DoSomething.org has a webpage called *What's Your Thing* which is designed to help kids just like you find a cause that "fires you up." If you are still not sure what you want to do and are looking for ideas, visit: https://www.dosomething.org/us.

SECTION THREE: Taking it to the "next level"

1. Getting Started for the Aspiring Young Philanthropist
    o Components of an effective strategic business plan
2. Establishing a nonprofit organization
    o What is a nonprofit?
    o Fiscal sponsorship
3. Additional Suggestions for Getting Started

==========

Getting Started for the Aspiring Young Philanthropist

As you might imagine, there is a significant difference in the level of commitment necessary for someone planning to volunteer at an existing organization and someone starting their own organization. Depending on what your goals are, starting your own organization might be the only option if nothing already exists to meet those goals.

Anyone who is seriously considering starting their own giving back organization must have some source of motivation driving them to dedicate their free time and energy towards a cause. **What is your motivation? Why are you reading this guidebook and considering taking on more responsibility?** There is no right or wrong answer to these questions and making the decision to give back is often the result of a personal life experience that has served as inspiration.

If you do decide to start your own organization, one of the first and foremost important things to do is effectively communicate what the organization is about, what need(s) it will meet, who it will serve and how it will to serve them. These answers will be the basis for everything you do, from recruiting volunteers to identifying the target population. At its most broad, your organization (even if it is a nonprofit) must have a business plan just like a for-profit business. This plan should include a **mission** as well as clearly defined **goals,** and **strategies**. The plan should be a working document that you can refer to and modify as you develop your ideas. The document can be thought of as a blueprint for your organization's activities. Keep in mind, any part of this blueprint may change over time as your organization evolves and new situations arise.

Components of an effective business plan
A mission should be summed up by a **mission statement**. A *mission statement* will serve to define the individual or organization's long-term view and purpose. It will provide the public with a good idea of what the activities will consist of, and will briefly define these activities. A mission statement should be brief and concise.

Example of a Mission Statement: "I (or organization name) will collect, refurbish and distribute used computers and electronics to students who would otherwise not have access to them."

The above example states what this person or group wants to accomplish at the most broad level: *collect, refurbish and distribute used computers and electronics to students*. It conveys this message in a clear, simple and concise way that the reader can understand quickly.

If you are thinking about "giving back" at this advanced level, the first step is to identify the one cause that you are most passionate about. Whether that is the environment, helping those less fortunate, a

social injustice, an endangered species or anything else you can think of, finding a cause you feel compelled to dedicate your time to is the most important first step to making a real difference. If you are not truly passionate about your cause, it will show in the work you do and decrease not only your effectiveness but your enjoyment of the process as well.

Once you have defined your mission, the next step is to get more specific by identifying several big picture **goals** and very specific, measurable **strategies,** which will allow a mechanism for tracking progress toward the goal(s).

Goals will describe in greater detail what you intend to accomplish (as stated in the mission statement). How many goals you have and what those goals include will depend on the scope of your mission statement. For the example given above, four goals could be as follows:

> 1. To raise awareness about lack of student access to computers in the community;
> 2. To encourage people to donate their used electronics to this organization;
> 3. To develop relationships with schools in need of computers;
> 4. To refurbish and donate computers to these schools.

According to Rod Seba of Breakthrough Training Inc., about three goals is a good number to start with, but it is not a magic number. Two could be just as good, as well as four or five. It really just depends on your specific plans and expectations.

Strategies consist of specific, quantitative, and measurable ways to identify what needs to be achieved in order to reach each of your goals. For each goal, you will need at least one strategy which will allow you to measure your progress toward each goal. Going back to the example given above, the strategies may be as follows:

Goal 1:   To raise awareness about lack of student access to computers in the community.
Strategy 1a: Distribute 2,000 flyers at computer stores, PTA meetings and through door-to-door canvassing within the first six months.
Strategy 1b: Create a website and email campaign; obtain 3,000 web hits in the first year.

Goal 2:   To encourage people to and companies to donate their used computers and electronics to this organization.
Strategy 2a: Collect at least two computers a month for the first year, three computers a month for the second year and five computers a month for the third year.

Goal 3:   To develop relationships with schools in need of computers.
Strategy 3a: Identify the three schools in the community most in need of computers
Strategy 3b: Set up meetings with administration to formulate agreements for them to accept and use the refurbished computers.

Goal 4:   To refurbish and donate computers to schools in need.
Strategy 4a: Donate at least 12 refurbished computers during year one, 24 computers during year two and 36 computers during year three.

Remember, strategies must be measurable, and could contain deadlines if you would like. Strategies may also include the number of people you will recruit to help fulfill your mission (if you are planning on having more than just yourself on staff).

Additionally, there is nothing wrong with THINKING BIG, but remember to keep your goals and strategies manageable. Nothing is more discouraging than failing to meet your own goals! Set reasonable expectations for yourself (especially at first) and modify them later if you find yourself exceeding them.

Now that you have got your **mission statement**, **goals** and **strategies**, you are ready to start working. When formulating the above plan on paper, you started from the long-term mission, moving down to more detailed goals and eventually down to very specific and manageable strategies to reach those goals. Now that you have got it all mapped out and you are ready to get out into the field and start the actual work, you will work backwards. Starting with the very specific everyday strategies and following your timeline to eventually accomplish your big picture goals and long-term mission!

Establishing a Nonprofit Organization

Although having nonprofit status will provide benefits to help your organization grow (such as tax exemptions and a greater ability to fundraise), it is not something that is right for everyone. If you are going to be operating locally or on a very small scale, it may not be necessary or beneficial for you to have legal nonprofit status. As with most everything in life, the process to become a legal nonprofit and obtain tax-exempt status with the IRS does cost money. The exact fees vary depending on the specifics of your organization, but the range is from a couple hundred to almost a thousand dollars. You will need to perform your own cost-benefit analysis to determine if it is worth the expense.

If you do decide becoming a legal nonprofit is right for you, the first step in the process is to file articles of incorporation in your home state. This process varies by state, so you will need to do some research about what your state requirements are. By searching the phrase "Articles of Incorporation (your state)" in your favorite internet search engine, you will find lots of great information about how this can be accomplished. Often, a named board of directors or similar managerial body is required in order to complete this step. Once you have incorporated in your state, you will then be eligible to file for tax-exempt (nonprofit) status with the IRS which will distinguish your organization from a for-profit business with respect to accounting regulations and tax exemptions. This can become complicated because there are many different IRS designations for tax-exempt organizations. Additionally, there are fees associated with obtaining this designation with the IRS.

The Public Counsel Law Center based in Los Angeles offers some resources on their website under "[Community Development Project Resources for Forming a Tax-Exempt California Nonprofit Corporation](#)". Here is the link to an IRS Application for Recognition of Exemption (to apply for federal tax-exempt status). Form 1023: https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-1023.

What is a "nonprofit?"
A nonprofit organization is a legal term for a business that is organized in such a way that it does not produce a profit for owners or shareholders. Formal nonprofits may be organized like a corporation, a private foundation, a public charity or may take on any other organizational structure that will best serve its needs. Essentially, being a "nonprofit" is no more than a legal designation which can make a group eligible for certain IRS tax exemptions and accounting guidelines with respect to income earned or received in the form of grants and donations. The costs of doing business as a nonprofit are generally less than for-profit companies because of tax exemptions. This allows organizations with little cash flow to focus their limited resources on their mission, rather than business expenses.

If you do decide to pursue nonprofit status for your organization, you'll likely need a parent's help as it is a legally binding process which will require adult supervision and signatures. This does have the

potential to become a time-consuming and costly process, so give it some serious thought with the help of a responsible adult. Being enthusiastic about your cause is one thing, funneling all that energy into the necessary channels to start a nonprofit and taking the responsibility for it is another thing. The process is very similar to starting your own business, but it actually requires even more paperwork and processing (to make sure you meet all the eligibility criteria to be considered non-profit).

Even though a nonprofit organization does not make a profit from the goods and/or services it provides, most nonprofits still have expenses, assets and even a payroll, just like any other business. How nonprofits pay for such expenses varies, private contributions, donations and public grants are only a few common sources of funding utilized by nonprofits. According to Bruce Hopkins, lawyer and author of _Starting and Managing a Nonprofit Organization_, typically one will need to secure the consulting services of one or more of the following three specialists: a lawyer (for assistance filing articles of incorporation, if necessary), an accountant (for assistance with filing for tax exemption) and a fundraiser before starting their own nonprofit organization (Hopkins, 2005). While you may be lucky enough to convince some of these individuals to donate their expertise, the more likely scenario is that you'll need to pay them to help you get started. Expenses vary depending on what you need help with and your specific geographic region, but many lawyers will provide an initial consultation free of charge. This should give you an idea of how much the process will cost. Making sure you have the startup capital necessary to follow through once you have begun is a very important consideration.

As mentioned above, legal nonprofit status is not necessary or desirable for all organizations. Carter McNamara, MBA, Ph.D. of Authenticity Consulting, LLC offers the following points of advice for someone considering starting a nonprofit.

"Before you start your nonprofit, it's helpful to realize that the phrase "starting a nonprofit" can mean many things. Read the following very basic information to begin thinking about what you mean when you set out to 'start a nonprofit.'
- You can be a nonprofit organization just by getting together with some friends, e.g., to form a self-help group. In this case, you're an informal nonprofit organization.
- Consider incorporating your nonprofit so it exists as a separate legal organization in order to:
  a) own its own property and its own bank account;
  b) ensure that the nonprofit can continue on its own (even after you're gone) and;
  c) protect yourself personally from operations of the nonprofit. You incorporate your nonprofit by filing articles of incorporation with the appropriate local state office. (An incorporated nonprofit requires a board of directors.)
- If you want to be exempt from federal taxes (and maybe some other taxes, too), you should file with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to be a tax-exempt organization. The IRS states that you must be a corporation, community chest, fund, or foundation to receive tax-exempt status. Articles of association may also be used in place of incorporation. (Probably the most well known type of nonprofits is a the IRS classification of 501(c)(3), a "charitable nonprofit'.)
- Depending on the nature of your organization, you may also be granted tax-deductible status from the IRS. Publication 526 lists the types of organizations to which donations are deductible.
- So, if you did all of these steps, you'd be an incorporated, tax-exempt nonprofit that could receive tax deductible donations.
- The particular steps you take depend on your plans for your organization, including the nature of its services. They also depend on how the IRS interprets the nature of your organization, including its services."
Source: https://managementhelp.org/organizations/nonprofits.htm

Helpful Resources
- [Free Management Library: Starting a Nonprofit Organization](#)
- Grantspace – [How do I start a nonprofit organization?](#)
- Grantspace – [Nonprofit Startup Resources By State](#)
- *[Starting and Managing a Nonprofit Organization: A Legal Guide](#)*
- Foundation Center – [Improve Your Skills](#)

Fiscal Sponsorship

Try not to be overwhelmed! Having gone through all this information, it might seem like a daunting task to undertake. However, starting a nonprofit does not mean you need to "go it alone." There are many organizations out there whose mission is to help people like yourself through this process and ease some of the legal and/or financial burden such an undertaking can have, in addition to providing strategies and tools for fundraising. Commonly called *fiscal sponsors*, these may be public or private entities whose mission is to facilitate this process for small, startup nonprofits like yours. Having a fiscal sponsor might restrict some of the control you have over your nonprofit operations, and you will need to decide if it is worth such a tradeoff. One of the most comprehensive lists available of fiscal sponsorship organizations can be found at https://fiscalsponsordirectory.org/.

Again, not all new organizations need to become legal nonprofit entities. Below are websites which provide answers to the question of whether your organization should become a legal nonprofit or not:
- When should a new community program seek 501(c)(3) status? http://www.fiscalsponsorship.com/
- A Comparison of starting a new 501(c)(3) organization with using a fiscal sponsor from the [Adler and Colvin Law Firm.](#)

Additional Suggestions for Getting Started

Take your time choosing your cause – What is it that you are truly very passionate about? Do not rush into the first thing that comes to mind or something that sounds good to you on a whim. This is something you are going to spend a lot of time on, and you do not want to become disenchanted (or bored) midway through. You'll need passion, drive and commitment to work through the tough times when things don't seem to be going as planned.

Grow naturally, don't rush it – You should be very enthusiastic about your cause! However, this does not mean you should try to "save the world" in one fell swoop. Great organizations start small and grow slowly to serve more and more people (or animals or communities, etc.) over time. Staying within your means is incredibly important; it does no good to anyone if you become overextended and need to shut down operations. If you recall from Jan Davidson's introduction, the Davidson Institute started in 1999 with 4 employees and 15 Young Scholars. Ten years later the Institute (and affiliated programs) employs more than 50 people, with 1,700 Young Scholars nationally!

Don't be a perfectionist – Everyone should strive to do their best. However, doing your best does not mean doing everything perfectly. It may not be very hard for you to get a 100% on a school test, but the real world is a bit different. Things rarely work out perfectly, and it often takes a great deal of flexibility, compromise, persistence and patience to get things done. The ability to laugh at situations (or yourself) when things do not go your way will help a great deal as well.

Skeptics – No matter what you do in life, there will always be people who doubt your abilities, your motivations and your dedication. This is just an unpleasant fact of life. Try not to let these people get you down. It is difficult sometimes to stay focused in the face of doubters, but over time as you become

more established, begin to see results and become more confident, these people will not have as much of an effect on you.

Continuous Improvement – All successful organizations have a mechanism to incorporate continuous improvement. Life is one big learning experience and this venture is no exception. You may do something one way, and then realize it would have been much more efficient and useful to do that same thing another way. Being open-minded to suggestions for how to do things better and constantly re-evaluating your operations to increase effectiveness is a very important skill. We suggest having "hindsight meetings." Hindsight meetings will allow you and anyone else involved in your organization (including those you are serving) to offer feedback and creative suggestions for how to make your operations run more smoothly next time around. You may have heard the phrase "hindsight is 20/20." At no time is this truer than when trying to accomplish something you have never attempted before.

SECTION FOUR: For Parents

1. Are YOU ready for your child to give back?
   - Scheduling
   - Legal Issues
   - Safety Concerns
   - Volunteer Scams
2. What are some of the benefits of community service for my family?
   - How you (as a parent) can help

==========

Are YOU ready for your child to give back?

Before embarking on this wonderful journey of community involvement, it is important to consider your feelings and concerns as a parent, as well as your child's readiness for such an endeavor. Here are some initial things to think about:

- What type of time commitment will this require of me and my child?
- Does he or she have enough time outside of their already busy schedule to commit to giving back?
- Are there any legal issues to be aware of? For example, some volunteer opportunities have specific age requirements. How do I know what is age-appropriate?
- Are there any safety or health concerns? For example, walking dogs (biting risk), planting flowers in the park (allergies), traveling (personal safety), etc.
- Is the cause my child is choosing to devote their time to a credible one? Be aware of scams.

Scheduling
Volunteering your time and effort to a healthy cause you are passionate about is a noble act. It takes a special individual to devote their energies to others who may need a helping hand. While giving back is a gracious deed, it can be very time consuming. An important question to consider is: do you and your child have enough time in your schedules devote to this undertaking without becoming "burnt out?" Since you will likely need to provide transportation, guidance and other support for this venture, it is not only your child who should think about the commitment carefully.

Involvement in extracurricular activities can be beneficial by increasing self-confidence, academic performance, school involvement, and establishing peer connections. Would your child be missing out on some of these opportunities if he or she becomes involved in a community service venture? Is it possible to incorporate community service *and* extracurricular activities into a busy schedule? It depends. If you are noticing that your child is frequently tired, stressed, or experiencing physical symptoms of being run-down, such as headaches or fatigue then it may be time to talk with them to see if they would like to cut back on some of their commitments. To learn more about the signs of burn out, feel free to peruse the following articles:
- The Overlooked Side Effects of Overscheduling Kids, Families
- The Overbooked Child: Are We Pushing Our Kids Too Hard?
- Tips for Parents: The Social/Emotional Needs of the Highly/Profoundly Gifted Individual

Legal Issues
Are there any legal issues to be concerned with? We encourage all individuals who are thinking about volunteering or starting their own organization to research any possible legal or regulatory issues. It is essential that parents are well aware of all of the details concerning their child's volunteer and community service activities. Every agency is unique, and may have specific guidelines with regard to volunteering. Depending on the organization, there are often rules and regulations when it comes to the child's age, as well as the amount of time allowed for volunteering. Always check with organizations directly for any volunteer policies and regulations.

Safety Concerns
First and foremost, your child's safety is of the upmost importance. As you can imagine, safety risks will depend on the type of service opportunity your child is pursuing. Depending on the organization, some will require background checks before volunteering, while others will not. If your child is developing their own community service project you should be extra diligent to ensure they are not taken advantage of.

There are clearly more safety concerns if your child is traveling to a place where the culture is different from their own. With any volunteer work, make sure your child is in a safe, secure place with a responsible adult present. Also, providing your child with a cell phone is very important so he or she can check in with you and in case of emergency. While volunteering is a wonderful and rewarding experience, it is always important to be aware of your surroundings. It would be a good idea to meet other individuals who are working with your son or daughter in order to get to know them and judge for yourself if you approve of your child spending time with this person or group of people. As always, listen to your parental instincts!

Volunteer Scams
Any time fundraising or donations are involved it is always wise to proceed with caution. It may be a good idea to do some research of your own about the organization first. Red flags should include organizations that "cold call" or have websites that ask for your bank or credit card information and/or social security number. You may want to look for specific contact information such as a physical location, a director, or phone numbers. Do not be hesitant to make a few phone calls and ask specific questions. If you are unable to speak with someone about your concerns, it might be a good idea to do some further research before investing in that particular organization or cause. A tax deduction slip, specific informational brochures, or documentation about the cause and fundraising goals should be available upon request. As mentioned previously, when disasters strike be extra cautious fundraising scams tend to increase.

You might be asking yourself why, with all these potential pitfalls should I bother allowing my child to take on such potentially risky activities? We would not be writing this book if we did not believe that the potential benefits outweigh most of the potential risks in well thought-out, legitimate community service activities. After all, it is in the Davidson Institute's mission to "provide opportunities for young people to develop their talents and make a positive difference." Giving back through community service is a wonderful way for young people to make this positive difference.

What are some of the benefits of community service for my family?

With today's hectic lifestyles, staying connected is not easy for many families. One way to achieve this connection is for parents and kids to become involved in community projects together. In addition to the intended benefits that your actions will bring to the people and organizations that are helped, it can also bring a family closer together and provide some much needed time to bond, not to mention the

positive role modeling opportunity it will provide for you as a parent. Leading by example is often the best way to teach a young person, and giving back activities are no exception. According to Anita Gurian, Ph.D. of the New York University (NYU) Child Study Center and Clinical Assistant Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the NYU School of Medicine:

> "not only do children derive satisfaction and a sense of pride from volunteering, they get a lot of important learning experiences. In addition to learning about an individual's responsibility to the community and to others, they:
> - Gain a wider perspective on the diversity of life styles – they learn to respect people of different backgrounds, abilities, ethnicity, and income levels.
> - Learn how to make and keep a commitment – how to be on time and complete assignments.
> - Acquire practical skills in a variety of settings – politics, hospitals, clinics, schools and clubs.
> - Learn to work as a team and to take on leadership roles.
> - Appreciate the individual's stake in the community.
> - Learn they have control of what happens in their own lives and communities.
> - Develop a realistic sense of the quality of their own lives by giving their time or something concrete to others."

Here is an article by Dr. Gurian and Dr. Richard Gallagher that mentions volunteerism: [Raising Responsive and Responsible Children](#).

How you (as a parent) can help
You play a critical role in your child's attitude towards giving back. By encouraging engagement in the community and modeling civic involvement of your own, your children will see an inherent value in such activities and enjoy taking part, alongside you.

Depending on how old your child is, encourage them to do as much as possible on their own. By doing so, you will allow them to feel a sense of ownership for their service. If necessary, help them identify and contact community agencies or assist them with Internet searches for community service opportunities. Allow him or her to be the ultimate decision maker within reason regarding where and when they would like to serve. As a parent, you can think about practical matters and logistics (such as transportation) and leave the rest up to your son or daughter.

Not sure how or when to start? Take this advice from Dr. Gurian:

> "Start early. Positive early experiences with other people and with their community form the basis for children's growing appreciation of the wider world. Families and children can volunteer together for some jobs – helping clean up a playground or a beach, simple repairs in low-income housing, working at a community food bank or facility for elderly people, visiting the homebound, helping at an animal shelter, or taking on a home baking project for fundraising. If your child has a particular interest, you can use it as a springboard into volunteering. For example, a child who loves animals may enjoy helping out at the local animal shelter.
>
> Children of all ages can participate in community service projects and programs. Young and early elementary school children want to please others and are willing to share. They would benefit from short, one-at-time, action-oriented tasks and projects that are active rather than sedentary. With supervision, young children can plant flowers to beautify schools or parks, help

serve snacks to shut-ins, collect food and clothing for emergency relief, or clean up a playground.

Middle school kids are enthusiastic about contributing to a cause, and although they are capable of planning, they still need some adult guidance. Children of this age can tutor younger children, sew, make, or repair items needed for local shelters, or raise money for a charity of their choice.

High school students, capable of relating and responding to the concerns and needs of others in a more mature way, can take a broad view. They can identify community needs and create plans of action, provide childcare, teach children and adults how to read, and work in schools, clubs, and community organizations."

We hope you are inspired to go out there and get involved with your kids!

SECTION FIVE: Resources

Please note: Not all volunteer and community service opportunities are appropriate for all ages. Please refer to the organization's website for specific age and/or residency requirements.

Helpful Articles

ServiceLearder.org Advice for Volunteers
Funding Ideas Community Service Scholarships, Grants and Other Opportunities
How to find meaningful volunteer opportunities
10 Great Volunteer Ideas for Teens

Volunteer Opportunity Searches

Most of these resources allow you to input your state or area code and search for local opportunities.
All for Good https://www.allforgood.org/
VolunteerMatch.org - Find volunteer opportunities in your state and city by many topics of interest:
https://www.volunteermatch.org/hours/service-projects/nursing-home-volunteers
Volunteer opportunities in your own community: https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve
Volunteen Nation http://volunteennation.org/
Volunteer Opportunities and Ideas http://www.networkforgood.org/volunteer/
Youth Serve America https://ysa.org/
Americorps https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/americorps
I Participate http://www.iparticipate.org/

Serve Internationally

Community Campus Service Learning Programs and Resources https://www.ccphealth.org/
Peace Corps https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/
Volunteer Abroad https://www.goabroad.com/volunteer-abroad
Global Volunteers https://globalvolunteers.org/
UN Volunteer https://www.unv.org/become-volunteer
Volunteer International http://volunteerinternational.org/
Volunteer Travel http://learningservice.info/

Service Learning

Generator School Network - Service Learning https://gsn.nylc.org/
The Y Service Learning Resource http://www.ymca.net/service-learning-resources/
Service Learning Web Resources http://www.goodcharacter.com/SERVICE/service.html

Interest-Based Opportunities

Some of these resources allow you to input your state or area code and search for local opportunities.
You can read about current and past Young Scholar Ambassador projects.

Conservation/Environment/Natural Resources
Earth Share http://www.earthshare.org/volunteer-opportunities.html
Volunteer options in National Parks https://www.nps.gov/getinvolved/volunteer.htm
The Nature Conservancy https://www.nature.org/about-us/volunteer/index.htm?intc=nature.tnav.getinvolved
National Parts, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, NOAA, USGS and more - volunteer opportunities
https://www.volunteer.gov/

Animal Welfare
Volunteer at Zoos and Aquariums https://www.aza.org/find-a-zoo-or-aquarium
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) https://www.spca.com/?page_id=7&lang=en
Animal Planet ROAR program https://www.animalplanet.com/tv-shows/roar/
National Humane Society Youth Club
http://www.humanesociety.org/parents_educators/mission/power_in_numbers_start_youth_club.html

Health Care
American Red Cross http://www.redcross.org/volunteer/become-a-volunteer#step1
Ronald McDonald House https://www.rmhc.org/volunteer
Health Care Volunteer Opportunities http://healthcarevolunteer.com/volunteers/index.php

Housing and Community Development
Habitat for Humanity https://www.habitat.org/volunteer
Housing and Urban Development Volunteer Opportunities
https://www.hud.gov/topics/volunteering/volunteerstates
The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/leadership-ethics//

Helpful Websites

What do you want to change? https://www.change.org/
What is your interest? https://www.dosomething.org/us
Youth Noise http://www.youthnoise.com/
The United Way https://www.unitedway.org/
Hoagies Gifted volunteer page http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/volunteer.htm

Books

Weinstein, Miriam, (2003). *Making a Difference: Scholarships for a Better World*. SageWorks Press. Fairfax, CA. ISBN 0-9634618-7-7.

Blaustein, Arthur I., (2003) *Make a Difference: America's guide to volunteering and community service.* Josey Bass. San Francisco, CA. ISBN: 978-0787968045.

Lewis, Barbara A. and Espeland, Pamela, (1995). *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas for Young People Who Want to Make a Difference*. Free Spirit Publishing. Minneapolis, MN. ISBN: 978-0915793822.

Collins, Joseph, DeZerega, Stefano, and Heckscher, Zahara, (2001). *How to Live Your Dream of Volunteering Overseas.* Penguin Books. New York, NY. ISBN: 978-0142000717.

Compton-Rock, Malaak, (2010). *If It Takes a Village, Build One: How I Found Meaning Through a Life of Service and 100+ Ways You Can Too*. Random House, ISBN-10: 076793170X.

SECTION SIX: Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions have been addressed throughout the guidebook. We've summarized the information pertaining to the most frequently asked questions here for convenient reference.

What does it mean to "give back?"

For the purposes of this guidebook, we defined "*Giving Back*" as the act of doing something for the good of a society, community or subset thereof with no expectation of reimbursement for your time, energy or actions. The most common type of giving back is usually volunteer work or other community service activity conducted through an organization which aims to fill a void in the goods or services needed by a community (or some members of a community). Generally speaking, a "giving back" type of activity will aim to provide this service (or good) to members of a community on a not-for-profit basis. See Section One.

Why should I give back?

The benefits of giving back are many. Beyond the personal fulfillment you will get from helping those in need, you can gain valuable interpersonal, professional, problem-solving and critical thinking skills; you can make connections with other like-minded individuals; and you could even gain valuable experience to put on a resume or college application. See Section Two.

What are some of the ways I can give back?

The answer to this question is limited only by your imagination. From volunteering a couple hours a month at a local community organization to dedicating a year or more to an international volunteer position, you should find the best fit for your schedule, interests and desired commitment level. If you are really motivated, you could even start your own community service venture to address a need you have identified. See Section Two.

How do I get started?

The first step is to figure out where you would like to volunteer your time. If you have never done any community service, the best way to start is with a small commitment. Look locally. Get involved with an organization close to home (such as a food bank, animal shelter, parks department, or a museum) for a couple hours a month. See how you like this activity before deciding to become more involved. Make sure to check with your parents before making a commitment, as they will likely need to provide you with transportation and other support. See Section Two and Section Three.

What if I want to start my own giving back project?

Starting your own project is a wonderful way to get involved! However, keep in mind this would require a significant commitment on your part. Unlike volunteering at an existing community organization, starting your own project will require much "behind the scenes" preparation before you will be ready to get out there and make a difference. As a minor, you will likely run into difficulties with people who do not believe in your abilities or do not take you seriously because of your age. It will take perseverance and determination on your part to work through these difficulties and stick to your mission. Do not be afraid of mistakes, but be sure to learn from them. Always strive for continuous improvement and keep an open mind for new ways to better achieve your mission. See Section Three.

What are some of the things I (and my parents) should look out for when searching for ways to give back?

If you are ready to get involved, it means you are probably a generous person. Unfortunately, generous people are too often the victims of scams because they are by nature always giving. It is great to be kindhearted and generous, but don't be naïve. Research any organization you are thinking about becoming involved with, and be sure to trust your gut feeling when something does not feel right. If you are fundraising or making a donation, never give out your, or your parent's personal banking or credit card information, or social security number. If you think you have been the victim of a scam, tell a responsible adult or your parents immediately. See Section Four.

Can students receive academic credit for their community service or volunteer work?

It is each school's decision whether to grant credit for students' volunteer work or not. If your school has a community service requirement or service learning program, it is likely that you will receive some credit for your work. Supervisors of volunteers are usually willing to provide teachers or program coordinators with the necessary job descriptions and assessments of the student's work to determine if credit should be given. Students are personally responsible for making the arrangements with their school and/or volunteer supervisor. See Common Ways to Give Back in Section Two.