TILTON LIBRARY HEALTHY COMMUNITY PROGRAM SERIES:

Volunteering in Your Community

In Honor of MLK National Day of Service
January 19, 2026

Community Volunteering Packet

National Days of Service inspire Americans to make a positive impact in our communities through service. This MLK Day, honor 30 years of the Day of Service by bridging divides and transforming our communities as we strive toward a brighter future for all.

Volunteering Matters

Every year, an estimated 1 billion people volunteer for causes important to them and give back to their communities. The collective good that all of these people achieve is spectacular. Volunteering benefits everyone involved. When you volunteer you'll find that helping others actually helps you - your state of mind and your feeling of purpose and making a difference.

For children and families, volunteering together teaches children positive values, like kindness, empathy, and tolerance, and opens up channels of communication between parent and child. Engaging children in community service can increase their participation as future volunteers, helping to create more resilient and sustainable communities.

Find a place to volunteer that genuinely aligns with your passions. You will grow much more from the experience as you will be self-motivated to engage more deeply and to bring your enthusiasm with you to your service experience. Volunteer work of this nature can help you to stand out during the application process. Everyone loves to be around people who are genuine, passionate, and engaged, so be thoughtful about what you choose to do with your time.

This packet has a comprehensive list of organizations in western Massachusetts - largely Franklin County - that rely on volunteers, and is organized by subject area.

Here's to 2025 - the year you make a difference in the life of another!

Focus on People with Special Needs

Special Olympics Massachusetts: Provides year-round sports training and athletic competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Goals include developing physical fitness, expressing courage, and experiencing joy. **www.specialolympicsma.org/**

Stavros: Helps people with disabilities and/or who are deaf to develop the tools and skills they need to take charge of their own lives. Volunteers can help people to access the outdoors or work as advocates, explaining how to fill out the necessary paperwork to live independently. **www.facebook.com/stavros413**

Whole Children: This organization in Hadley helps to provide recreational, social, and enrichment programs for children and teens of all abilities, specially designed for those with special needs. **www.wholechildren.org/**

Focus on Seniors

Senior centers are very active places for seniors that offer a breadth of low to no-cost activities.

South County Senior Center (serves, Deerfield, Sunderland, and Whately):
www.facebook.com/SouthCountySC/

West County Senior Center (serves Ashfield, Buckland, Shelburne):
the-senior-center.org/

Greenfield Senior Center: greenfield-ma.gov/departments/council_on_aging_(senior_center)/index.php

Highland Valley Elder Services: Volunteers can assist in a breadth of activities: providing educational trainings for disease management, delivering meals, serving as advocates for seniors, helping to manage money, and more. **highlandvalley.org/**

Lifepath: They help people stay independent in their homes and communities. They also coordinate the right services for each person using a variety of providers and programs. **lifepathma.org/support-our-mission/volunteer/**

Valley Neighbors: Offers volunteer services and programs to residents age 60 and over who wish to continue living independent, engaged lives in their homes and communities, free of charge. **https://valleyneighbors.org/volunteer**

Focus on Children and Teens

America Reads/America Counts: Tutor children in reading or math. **www.fivecolleges.edu/americareads**

18 Degrees: This expansive organization strives to improve early education and care as well as child and family well-being. It also offers intensive foster care and adoption services and an intensive classical music program for social change. **18degreesma.org/**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western MA: Serve as a mentor to a local youth. Kids just need the consistent presence of a positive adult role model. Chilling out over a pizza, playing videogames, and baking cookies are just some of the things our matches do together. You don't need any special skills or training. It's just about being there. **www.bbbswm.org/**

One Life Project Inc.: Help to build and create a kinder world where we educate, advocate for, and support teens, college students, and young adults who are struggling with mental health in the hopes of preventing suicide in young people and ending the stigma that surrounds mental health. **www.projectonelife.org/**

Friends of Children Inc.: There are three main programs to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people. Our Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program provides training and supervision for community volunteers to serve as best interest advocates for abused, neglected and other vulnerable children and youth involved in the Hampshire/Franklin Juvenile Court. **https://friendsofchildreninc.org/**

The Brick House Community Resource Center: A community center that supports youth and family well-being by providing a place for creativity and learning, growth and leadership, and strengthening community connection. The after-school youth drop-in space is at its heart. **https://brickhousecommunity.org/volunteer/**

Dial Self: Helps young people increase their personal and community strengths and develop autonomy by connecting them with housing, income, education and civic opportunities. DIAL/SELF embraces the principles inherent in the Positive Youth Development framework, which believes that all youth possess unique strengths which are enhanced by community support and collaboration and that all youth should have the right to exercise choice in their own lives. **https://dialself.org/p/25/Support-DIALSELF**

Focus on Animals, Nature, and Environment

Dakin Animal Shelter: Community-supported animal welfare organization that provides shelter, medical care, adoptions, and spay/neuter services to more than 20,000 animals each year. **www.dakinhumane.org/volunteer-getting-started**

Franklin County Sheriff's Office Regional Dog Shelter: Protects and improves the lives of stray, lost and unwanted dogs by offering a safe, welcoming facility, providing care and enrichment, and finding a home best suited for each animal.
www.fcrdogkennel.org/volunteering

The Franklin Land Trust: A non-profit organization in western Massachusetts that assists farmers and other landowners who want to protect their land from unwanted development. **www.franklinlandtrust.org/volunteer/**

The Hitchcock Center: Connects people with nature and encourages a deeper emotional bond with the natural world that sustains us all, through educational programs that offer a particular focus on children, who live in a world of environmental challenges.
www.hitchcockcenter.org/support-us/volunteer/

Great Falls Discovery Center: Shows the natural, cultural, and industrial history of the Connecticut River watershed with displays, exhibits, events, and classes for all ages.
https://greatfallsdiscoverycenter.org/friends-of-the-gfdc/

Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC): Restores and advocates for clean water, healthy habitats, and resilient communities to support a diverse and thriving watershed.
www.ctriver.org/get-involved

Focus on Prison Libraries and Education

Great Falls Books through Bars: Sends free books, resources and reading material to prisoners. Holds volunteer days where people read letters from prisoners asking for books and get books from the organization’s in-house library to send in response.
www.greatfallsbooksthroughbars.org/support/

Focus on Food and Farms

Stone Soup Cafe: Committed to breaking down social barriers like class, race, ability and age, in order to bring people together around cooking and eating to create a beloved community, increase equitable access to healthy food and build solidarity. Stone Soup consists of three central programs: a Pay-What-You-Can Community Meal, a Community Store, and a Culinary Institute program. **www.thestonesoupcafe.org/p/13/Volunteer**

Food Bank of Western MA: Provides nutritious food, strengthens our region's food assistance network, and develops solutions to the causes of hunger in our community. **www.foodbankwma.org/get-involved/volunteer/**

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA): Strengthens farms and engages the community to build the local food economy. They do this with their "buy local" mission through programs to support local farmers, help seniors and those in the SNAP program get affordable farm-fresh food, and their emergency farm fund. You can help through purchasing from local farms, CISA membership, and being an advocate for their work at a policy level. **www.buylocalfood.org/get-involved/**

Amherst Survival Center: Promotes the health and well being of residents of Franklin and Hampshire counties with a wide variety of programs designed to help people meet their basic needs by providing a welcoming community where families and individuals can come for food and access to other resources. **https://amherstsurvival.org/volunteer/**

Seeds of Solidarity: Consists of two entities - Seeds of Solidarity Farm which utilizes regenerative, no-till practices to work to decolonize the relationship with the soil, and commit to keeping produce affordable for the low-wealth region; and Seeds of Solidarity Education Center Inc. which focuses workshops and other initiatives that foster health, justice and food and energy resiliency in the region. **https://seedsofsolidarity.org/.** ***Call Ricky at 978-544-7564 to talk about volunteering.***

Focus on LGBTQAI+

Stonewall Center: Serves the campus, the other Five Colleges, and the surrounding community by providing cultural and educational programming; LGBTQIA+ allyship training sessions; a DVD and book library; information and referrals; support for individuals who experience harassment and discrimination; advocacy; and community outreach. **www.umass.edu/stonewall/resources/local-and-state-resources/community-organizations**

Focus on the Arts and Historical Experiences

The Shea Theater Arts Center: Franklin County's only publicly owned performing arts center that offers diverse, creative programming – from punk rock to poetry slams – supported by a commitment to inclusive community engagement. **https://sheatheater.org/x/2/Volunteer-Opportunities**

Historic Deerfield: Experience one of the best-preserved villages and rural landscapes in North America through dynamic encounters with the stories, cultures, and material worlds of those who have made New England home. **www.historic-deerfield.org/historic-deerfield-ambassador/**

The Springfield Museums: Uses art, history, science and Dr. Seuss to explore our shared connections and unique perspectives to promote engagement, literacy and learning. **https://springfieldmuseums.org/volunteer/**

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA): Is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art. With vast galleries and a stunning collection of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace all forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, film, painting, photography, theater, and new, boundary-crossing works of art that defy easy classification. **https://massmoca.org/event/volunteer/**

Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association (PVMA): Purposely chooses to remember and honor the Pocumtuck People and their homeland with the organization's legal name and endeavors to build productive relations with contemporary Native American nations today, through exhibits at the Memorial Hall Museum, a research Library, Deerfield Teachers' Center, Indian House Children's Museum, and Community Outreach projects. **https://deerfield-ma.org/join/**

Focus on Civic Engagement

The Town of Deerfield (and other local municipalities): Rely on its citizens to run for office or volunteer to serve on town boards and committees. Want a voice in forming policies and making plans in your community? Then look for opportunities on local town websites, like Deerfield's: **www.deerfieldma.us/1/home**

Focus on Partner and Family Trauma

It Takes a Village (ITAV): Is a women-led nonprofit dedicated to being the 'village' every family deserves. Our mission is to empower families and strengthen communities by providing the tools and resources needed to break the cycle of poverty. Since 2009, ITAV has been a critical safety net for underserved and vulnerable families across Western Massachusetts, supporting their journey from crisis to stability. Includes comprehensive list of resources of support for Intimate Partner Violence/Domestic Violence issues: **https://hilltownvillage.org/volunteer/portal/domesticviolence/.** Volunteer information here: **https://hilltownvillage.org/volunteer/**

Safe Passage: Is dedicated to creating a world free of domestic violence and relationship abuse, by supporting survivors and their families, engaging in the community, and advocating for systemic change. **https://safepass.org/volunteer/**

Focus on Immigrant Populations

Center for New Americans: Is a community-based, non-profit adult education center that provides the under-served immigrant, refugee and migrant communities of Massachusetts' Pioneer Valley with education and resources to learn English, become involved community members and obtain tools necessary to maintain economic independence and stability. **https://cnam.org/volunteer/**

Jones Library ESL & Citizenship Program: This award-winning program offers volunteer tutors, English and citizenship classes, and other services to adult immigrants in the Amherst area. **www.joneslibrary.org/248/ESL-Citizenship**

Focus on Addiction, Harm Reduction, and Recovery

Tapestry Health: Provides harm reduction services throughout Western Massachusetts, where anyone can receive the care they need without judgment or stigma. **www.tapestryhealth.org/work-with-us/**

Focus on Business, Accounting, and Legal Services

Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll): Is a nonprofit organization that partners with communities nationwide to help under-represented individuals successfully start and grow a business through intensive business training, mentorship and an extended professional support network. **https://eforall.org/volunteering/**

Junior Achievement of Western Massachusetts: Has provided economic education and financial literacy programs to the youth of Western Massachusetts and Vermont. JA of Western Massachusetts impacts thousands of young people each year, opening their minds to their potential and preparing them for life after graduation.
www.jawm.org/volunteer/

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program: Offers free tax help through IRS-certified volunteers to people who generally make $64,000 or less, including persons with disabilities, the elderly and limited English speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. **www.masscap.org/about/volunteering/**

Western Mass Legal Services: Provides free legal help in non-criminal cases for low-income people and elders who live in western Massachusetts. The number of people eligible for our help is far greater than our resources. As a result, we have to establish priorities for the kinds of cases we handle. Our current case acceptance priorities are housing, government benefits, family law and domestic violence, employment, disability, health care and problems uniquely affecting elders.
www.wmls.org/donations/volunteer/index.html

Community Legal Aid (CLA): Is the civil legal aid provider for low income and elderly residents of Central and Western Massachusetts (Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester counties). CLA offers a diverse array of opportunities for private bar volunteers interested in assisting clients with their civil legal needs such as housing, family law matters, estate planning, and consumer debt issues.
https://communitylegal.org/get-involved/pro-bono/volunteer/

Focus on Unhoused Population

Way Finders: Believes every person, every family deserves a secure, stable home. Way Finders' goal is to help them get one and keep then there. They also manage family homeless shelters in our service area. **www.wayfinders.org/get-involved/volunteer-opportunities/**

Craig's Doors: Adheres to a "housing first" model, with case managers at year-round and seasonal emergency shelters to work closely with guests to find sustainable, permanent re-housing that meets their needs, while connecting them with a wide network of partner service providers to coordinate other aspects of their care. **https://craigsdoors.org/help**

Horizons for Homeless Children: Is leading the fight in Massachusetts to help alleviate the trauma and stress of homelessness on both children and their families by providing high-quality early education, vital opportunities for play, support for parents, and crucial advocacy on behalf of some of our most marginalized citizens. **https://horizonschildren.org/volunteer-n-network/**