



## VOLUNTEERING: A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF LIFE

Reprinted from  
*Reflexology Across America*  
The RAA News Magazine  
Winter 2009



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The Stone Institute LLC is the first school based in the greater St. Louis and bi-state area dedicated to teaching reflexology for national certification. Certification can be completed within one year.

Stone blends East and West approaches in training health professionals and laypersons in modern applications of this ancient healing practice.

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Life comes at us fast and furious. Like passengers on a bullet train, the people, feelings, events that form the landscape of our life streaks by in a blur. At the end of the day, we have lived a segment that is never to return. At the end of each hour, a cycle has passed. At the end of a breath, the great pause descends. At the end of a moment, that precious awareness of “now” becomes the past.

We fill our days with noise and busyness. Focus on outer goals; actions to accomplish. Yet, the heart whispers in the still quietness of the night as mysteries unfold. The vision of our Higher Purpose waits within sight. Waits for acknowledgement.

What would life be like if we allow Divine Imagination to create a moment of heaven on earth? There are as many ways to allow this to occur as there are moments in a life. One path is the path of love. The path of volunteering.

### What is a Volunteer?

A volunteer performs or gives services of one's own free will. The action is intentional and by choice without constraint or guarantee of reward. (*American Heritage Dictionary*) The rewards are intrinsic (or belonging to the essential nature of a thing) and personal.

### Why Volunteer?

People volunteer usually in the heat of excitement. The emotion of the moment opens the heart and a hand is raised, an email dispatched. That surge of happiness is wonderful. When asked, volunteers step forward:

- To meet others and help others.
- To be a part of something larger than myself.
- To give back. I made it this far because someone took the time to help me. I want to help others achieve their dream.
- Sometimes (to be honest), to look good on a resume or application.
- Sometimes (again, painful honesty), to have an official

Most of us are not saints, but I honestly believe, we are on the path to saint-

***“All you need is deep within you waiting to unfold and reveal itself. All you have to do is be still and take time to see for what is within, and you will surely find it.”***

*~ Eileen Caddy*

hood. We all have our moments of brilliance when the heart blossoms unrestrained. And, also when the shadows close heart until the sun shines again.

So whatever our intention for volunteering, if we are honest with ourselves, we move forward in helping others, and in helping others we also grow.



sounding title.

- Self-recognition, ego-gratification, a sense of accomplishment (this is getting tough).





### True Stories How Volunteering Changes Lives

- A Tibetan woman was dying. The doctor instructed her to give away all her possessions, move in with her children, and devote what time remained to her to help the dying. The woman lived another ten years.
- A man preoccupied past disappointments and perceived failures, developed heart trouble. Reluctantly, he adopted a friendly, little dog. Out of need, the man walked the dog daily. Love grew, and the man took the dog on little errands. The man met others who enjoyed the little dog. This helped heal the man's heart and sense of loss.
- A healer became disappointed in the ways of the world and how clients did not seem to assume "full complete healing." She began to focus on the gains, no matter how small, and began to see the continuum of life. Her depression lifted. Joy filled her heart. And, she once again served others.
- A reflexologist works with those in the final stages of life. She doesn't talk, doesn't think. Is just present and listens to and feels the heart. Her silent healing presence comforts others.
- Add your story here. When was a time that volunteering changed your life? The life of someone you know?

### Sustain the Joy

Once the hand is raised and the assignment accepted, the Work begins. Some sustain their commitments to completion. How do they do this? The challenges, personality issues, time demands, are present for them as for everyone. So, how do they *accomplish* more? Here are some insights shared by successful volunteers:

- Keep the higher mission (or vision) clear.
- Recognize that setbacks (and even conflicts) are natural. Keep going.
- Always work toward the higher good for the common good.
- Keep the Work in the back of one's mind or inner vision. Hold a sacred space for it to unfold in one's consciousness. Then, when it is time to sit down and work, it flows more easily.
- Recognize that this Work, as all work, is a spiritual experience.
- Practice your Practice.
- Respect others.
- Fulfill one's responsibility (the ability to respond). If you are unable to or become unwilling, tell someone. People are counting on you.
- If the time available changes (grows or shrinks), let others know. They need time to make adjustments in their schedules, too.
- Be willing to make mistakes. Be willing to learn.
- Practice patience.
- Have a sense of humor.
- Celebrate the joy of working with others.
- Recognize the contributions of others.
- Keep a journal – to help identify the small and great ways the beauty of it all unfolds.
- Write down your blessings. Practice gratitude. Volunteering is a way to multiply blessings.
- When distractions occur, rekindle the inner momentum. Strengthen resolve.
- Contact a friend. The fire of friendship feeds the fires of commitment (and contentment).
- Get enough sleep. Dream.

### Practical Volunteering Point-by-Point

There are overt benefits to being a volunteer. Some are:

- It keeps associations, organizations, and practices active, thriving, and moving forward.

**"I learned this, at last, by my experience: that if [one] advances confidently in the direction of [one's] dreams, and endeavors to live the life which [one] has imaged, [one] will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."**

~ Henry David Thoreau

- Connect with others. Volunteers meet other volunteers. Reflexologists meet other reflexologists. Leaders meet other leaders.
- Build leadership skills. And, these are transferable into for-profit ventures.
- Have fun. Yes, it can be wonderful fun!
- Indulge in a new experience. Tryout a new role for yourself. Always wanted to write? Give a talk? Learn web design? Volunteering is a great way to gain experience.
- Professional development. Experience and grow in skill, ability, and talent.
- Expand your vision. Expand your horizons. Go the distance.

### All Together Now

To volunteer takes time. It also takes heart. And constancy. And commitment. Just like having a friend, raising a child, growing a garden. Some volunteer to carry the watering can. Some plant seeds. Others enjoy weeding. Still others come for the harvest. Together, everyone is needed – for tasks small and great – to produce a beautiful garden for all to enjoy.

Whatever your passion, indulge yourself. Volunteer. It's good for the heart and sole.

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