

# NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

## Pontiac Area Chamber of Commerce

Volunteers are the life blood of any non-profit organization. When people come together to improve their communities and help others, the world changes just a bit...for the community, for the organization and for the volunteer. We cannot succeed without the dedication and service of our volunteers.

National Volunteer Weeks give us a formal opportunity to thank those who serve others throughout the year. The week is dedicated to inspiring, recognizing and encouraging people to engage in their communities.

As a non-profit organization, the Pontiac Area Chamber of Commerce relies heavily on its volunteers to support its mission...which is to create and maintain a favorable business climate in the Pontiac area and to stimu-

late pride and involvement among its constituency.

A dedicated board of directors leads the volunteer efforts for the Chamber. Volunteers help the Chamber in many ways, from serving on committees to stuffing envelopes for a mailing to making sure the Thresherman's Parade goes off without a hitch and from planning Chamber events to welcoming new members.

So, you may ask 'Who can volunteer?' And, the answer is anyone! Volunteers can be women or men, children or seniors, blue-collar workers or white-collar workers, people of any religion or race. There are no boundaries on volunteering.

Our current areas of focus for volunteering are the Ambassador Program, which is a group of dedi-

cated individuals that assist in reaching our chamber members. We also have several key committees that are looking for volunteers. Our membership committee is focused on membership dues and benefits.

The marketing committee is focused on promoting the Chamber to the community. The 100 year celebration committee is focused on how the Chamber is going to celebrate its 100th year in 2017. We also have an events committee that looks at all the events the Chamber offers. We also have a parade and a golf event committee.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering with the Pontiac Area Chamber, call us at 815.844.5131 or email Mindi Terrell at mterrell@pontiacchamber.org.

## St. Vincent de Paul Pantry

"Jesus Feeds Thousands on North Chicago Street"

The biblical "loaves and fishes" story (Matthew 14:13-21) tells how Jesus was able to feed thousands with just five loaves of bread and two fish. Is Jesus still in the business of multiplying a few loaves and fishes to feed the multitudes? We think so at St. Vincent De Paul Pantry, located at 505 N. Chicago Street in Pontiac. The ministry of the St. Vincent DePaul Food Pantry is to feed a lot of folks, all year round. Jesus is still feeding thousands, with the help of St. Vincent DePaul Pantry volunteers.

The Pantry recorded over 10,000 client visits last year. That's a lot of food, and a lot of people. Week after week, it's our volunteers who make it all possible. Evelyn Ribordy, Pantry Liaison to the Pantry Board always says that the volunteers' help with all the various jobs makes her job a lot easier. The ministry of helping the less fortunate is what it's all about. The St. Vincent DePaul Pantry exists to help those folks who need it with food, clothing and other

small household items.

It is heartwarming to see the volunteers working together for one cause. The Pantry Board says "Thank You" for so many hours contributed. The Pantry Board, composed of 12-15 parish members, (who are also volunteers), want to extend their appreciation to each and every one of the pantry workers: haulers, stock persons, receptionists, bookkeepers, baggers, clerks, donors and those who pray for our continued success. All of the St. Mary's and St. Joseph's parishioners are also so helpful in providing food donations and monetary donations. The Board would also like to extend their thanks to Wal-Mart (Feeding America), County Market and other local businesses and organizations for their participation in the Pantry's mission of feeding the hungry of our community.

The volunteers are what make this caring ministry possible. They make this ministry work every week and every day. They really are the hands and feet of Christ.

## Veterans share love of country with the next generation

By Nancy Henderson

John Ballinger had always been a take-charge kind of guy. So in 2010, after seeing the deplorable conditions at an at-risk elementary school in Chattanooga, Tenn., the former Army maintenance officer volunteered one hour a week, simply talking to fifth-graders about what he called 'everyday stuff': the meaning of the American flag and geography lessons from his travels around the country. By the end of the year, the students' teacher and principal had both noticed an improvement in behavior and focus.

That experience inspired Get Veterans Involved (GVI), a nonprofit in Ooltewah, Tenn., that pairs returning combat veterans with economically disadvantaged students. Through GVI (getvetsinvolved.org), vets will mentor more than 250 students this year.

'In the military, they teach us how to stand up and be proud,' says Ballinger, something the GVI vets try to pass along to their young proteges. 'All those things are embedded in us as veterans: character, morals and ethics.'

At all five schools where GVI volunteers mentored

last year, a group of elementary students now hoists the flag each morning before class. Previously, most didn't understand the meaning of the flag, and some had never heard of Betsy Ross.

And the kids aren't the only ones who benefit. 'I realized how damaged I was emotionally from my deployments in the military,' Ballinger says. 'I got a sense of mission and purpose by helping.'

COMING HOME  
Volunteer organizations across the country help returning military heroes and their families transition to civilian life. Here is a sampling of the organizations dedicated to serving our veterans:

Homes for Our Troops "Taunton, Mass. Launched in 2004 by a contractor, Home for Our Troops builds mortgage-free, specially equipped homes for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who sustained multiple amputations, paralysis and other severe injuries in combat after 9/11. So far, the organization has constructed nearly 200 homes nationwide.

VetForce1 "Chattanooga, Tenn. Returning veterans under age 25 face an unemployment rate of 19 per-

cent, says Larry Trabucco, executive director of VetForce1, a group that recruits 'military-friendly employers' to mentor vets and hire them for internships, part-time jobs and full-time careers. A second VetForce1 chapter launches in Daytona Beach, Fla., this month, with 137 more nationwide already planned.

Honor Flight Network "Springfield, Ohio When retired Air Force captain, private pilot and physician assistant Earl Morse learned that some of his senior patients yearned to see the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., but lacked the means to do so, he vowed to make it happen. Then he asked for help from other pilots. Since 2005, the Honor Flight Network has escorted nearly 139,000 World War II veterans to the nation's capital. Moving forward, the group plans also to send veterans from more recent conflicts.

This article originally appeared as Still Serving: Veterans Share Love of Country with the Next Generation on American Profile

## How to raise kids who grow up giving

The message of giving has reached new levels in recent years. While charitable endeavors have long been the center of many local community groups' outreach efforts, social media has made charitable efforts as popular as ever, with millions taking part in exercises such as the Ice Bucket Challenge and other ventures meant to raise awareness for charitable causes.

Charitable giving is a family tradition in many households. Many parents find that the earlier they introduce their children to charitable giving and volunteering, the more likely their kids are to embrace these efforts, both immediately and into adulthood. Parents can impart lessons to their youngsters about the importance of giving during the end of the year, when many charities raise their public profiles, or when newsworthy events, such as devastating storms, draw attention to the less fortunate.

Nancy Phillips, founder and president of DollarSmart Kids Enterprises, Inc., says it's been scientifically proven that giving increases self-esteem and self-confidence. Children who learn that they can help others will soon realize they have the power to make a difference. Recognizing that they can make a big change is a very empowering discovery for kids. Here's how parents



can foster a love of giving.

- Choose age-appropriate tasks. Young children do not have a lot of money, so try to find charitable tasks that allow them to donate their time and skills. Kids can help make cookies for bake sales or participate in food drives in front of grocery stores for certain charities.

- Let children choose the beneficiary of their efforts. Children may have their own ideas about who they want to help. Let kids choose because they're more likely to get behind the effort if they feel their input is valued.

- Lead by example. Don't just pay lip service to the idea of being charitable. Provide a good example by getting involved yourself. Make sure the entire family gets involved with the effort of giving.

- Let children see where their efforts are going. Writing a check is a rather unceremonious way of giv-

ing that may not resonate with young children. But if they can see food being delivered to the hungry or pet supplies going to an animal shelter, they can see the fruits of their efforts paying off.

- Create a giving account or box. Make it a family tradition that members of the household will donate an item they receive or a small amount of money to the box each month. At the end of the year, the family can deliver those funds and gifts to a charity of choice.

- Talk about giving at dinner. Make philanthropy a regular part of family conversation. Discuss the plight of the less fortunate with your children, focusing on the value of volunteering and helping others.

Children can learn to be generous and give to others at an early age, and those that do are more likely to grow into charitable adults. GB15B633



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**St. Vincent DePaul Pantry Food & Clothing**  
Thanks to all our volunteers throughout the year  
Sponsored by  
St. Mary's & St. Joseph's  
- Donations to assist the needy  
**Open Thurs. 12 noon-5:15 p.m.**  
505 N. Chicago, Pontiac

**United Way**  
Serving the community for over 70 years  
210 N Plum, Pontiac **815-844-5131**

**Thank You**  
to all our wonderful volunteers!  
You bless our lives in so many ways!  
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