

The monthly Community Engagement Update newsletter is on hiatus for the time-being. Many community organizations are not accepting volunteers at the moment but due to increasing food insecurity and other needs, some organizations are more in need of volunteers, particularly those providing food to children and shelter/food to those experiencing homelessness. Obviously if you are a person with increased risk for getting sick or if you are sick, then you should not volunteer in ways where you will be coming into close contact with other people/places. But there are many other ways you can help support and provide for communities in need during this time. Below are postings from various community partners about ways that you can help out.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Toledo - United Way of Greater Toledo: Volunteers Needed

Volunteers needed in response to the urgent community need for children's access to food due to school closures. Visit www.feedtoledokids.org to sign up to help prepare shelf stable snack packs or to help distribute them to children in our community. If you are able to help on multiple distribution days please do so as consistent volunteers will help expedite the distribution. We are doing all that we can to keep these opportunities small group, and will be asking volunteers to wash hands, wear gloves, etc. We ask that if you are feeling sick, are someone in a high-risk audience or someone who cares for that population, you do not volunteer at this time but instead consider making a donation to help our community.

Toledo - Food for Thought: Volunteers Needed

Food for Thought is committed to continuing to serve our community and will still be running all programs as scheduled. PB&J packing has been moved to an offsite location and will happen with a smaller group. We will be capping volunteer events to meet current guidelines for group meetings. Please call or email our office for more information and to sign up. 419-972-0022. info@feedtoledo.org

Toledo - Cherry Street Mission: Volunteers Needed

During this time, volunteers are needed. In our food service opportunities to use gloves and other sanitation protocols are adhered to. It is **crucial the care and provision to those served at Cherry Street continues uninterrupted** as it has since 1947. During this time, volunteer opportunities will primarily focus on basic services. This includes services that allow us to meet the essential needs of our guests such as providing meals and emergency shelter. More information about volunteering can be found here: <https://cherrystreetmission.org/get-involved/volunteer>

Youngstown – United Way of Youngstown & Mahoning Valley

Connect with United Way of Youngstown and Mahoning Valley for more information on how you can help. While they do not currently list any volunteer opportunities, they will be updating their page regularly regarding needs. <https://www.ymvunitedway.org/united-way-working-to-fill-need-during-covid-19-pandemic/>

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY:

Give to food banks and other delivery services

If you are in Northwest Ohio, I recommend giving to **Seagate Food Bank** (<https://seagatefoodbank.org>). Otherwise, **Feeding America**, a national hunger-relief organization, is accepting donations in order to help give food to those who need it most, including children who usually get healthy meals from schools that are now closed. You can donate at <https://www.feedingamerica.org> or use this directory to look for local food banks and soup kitchens in your area. Directory: <https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/foodbanks/index.html> Also consider giving to organizations like **Meals on Wheels** or **Mobile Meals**, which helps deliver food to seniors who may be self-isolating in order to stay healthy. The organization is currently asking for emergency funds from the U.S. government, but you can still donate here: <https://mobilemeals.org>

Donate blood

The Red Cross currently has an urgent need for blood donations because of the outbreak. On its site, the organization explains, "Donating blood is a safe process and people should not hesitate to give or receive blood. Right now, eligible and healthy donors are strongly urged to make an appointment to give soon." Find out if you're eligible to give and how to do so here: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/>

Offer Assistance to At-Risk Neighbors

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers the elderly and people with chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease to be at higher risk from the coronavirus. If you're in a lower-risk group, reach out to your higher-risk community members and offer to help with grocery shopping, yard work, picking up prescriptions, or offering other assistance. Even if they're already fully stocked, simply sharing your plans with one another can be helpful, particularly as people spend more time at home instead of out. Send letters or care cards to those in nursing homes who are no longer able to have visitors. Set up video chat dates or play online games together.

Local Economy Support Ideas

If you have the means and were excited to go to your favorite restaurant or theater or coffee shop this week, buy a gift card to help keep them going. Depending on how long this crisis lasts, a few gift cards purchased to tuck away to give as gifts for the holidays could sustain your favorite businesses through this crisis. Shop local! Invest in your small, locally-owned businesses that will be particularly impacted by the crisis.

Help Animal Rescue Organizations

Concerns about animals being vectors for the virus are leading to some animals being dumped: check in with your local SPCA or rescue orgs to see what you can do to support them. Some rescue organizations are having to close their doors to drop-offs so as not to over-strain smaller staffs and reduce their ability to care for animals already in their care. Reach out to your local shelter or other animal welfare / rescue group if you can foster or ask how you can otherwise support their efforts. This is also a great time to check out the "wish lists" of local rescue organizations and, from the safety of your home, order some supplies they need online to be delivered straight to them.

Caring for the Environment and the Natural World

Recommendations from Keep Indianapolis Beautiful! (an Indianapolis non-profit focused on the environment, gardening and beautification). In lieu of volunteering with a local non-profit, try the following outside around your home or offer support to a home bound neighbor. The following ideas can be a safe, healthy activity, provided you avoid groups of more than 10 people and practice recommended social distancing.

- **Take a walk** around your neighborhood or a nearby park, looking for signs of spring.
- **Prep garden beds** or prune back overgrowth in your yard.
- **Clear your storm drain!** The weather forecast predicts a warm, wet end of the week. Make sure the curbs and drains near your home are free of debris so rain water can flow smoothly and prevent street flooding.
- **Pick up litter!** Feeling stir crazy or looking for an interactive science lesson for the kids? Grab a pair of gloves, an old grocery bag, and see how litter-free your neighborhood can be.
- Take **photos** of trees and flowers that are starting to bloom to share with others who may not be able to get out and see them for themselves.