

People Helping People

CALL OF THE WILD

Since ending his 34-year career as a weapons engineer, **Neil Adams, 65, has lived and volunteered at ten U.S. national parks and historical sites.** It's his dream retirement, and he says he's getting quite an education. "I've learned more in the past four years being out here than from all the books I read in my first 60," says Adams, who's done everything from lecturing about alligators to leading tours. He's now at Fort Caroline National Memorial Park in Jacksonville, Florida. "People think you're a ranger, so when you tell them you're not, they're amazed at how much you know."

Cool Ways to Give Back

You can lend a hand...or your experience...or your passions, to help make a difference. Volunteer opportunities are everywhere these days.

Here's a fun sampling to get you inspired **BY MICHELLE DIAMENT**

Make a soldier smile

● **How it works** Send upbeat letters or packages to a deployed member of the U.S. Armed Services. Or work with friends and family to send packages to several service members at once. (Hint: beef jerky and homemade cookies are always a hit.)

● **Time it takes** A few hours each month for up a year.

● **Contact** My Soldier (914-323-5172; mysoldier.com).

Protect a natural treasure

● **How it works** Pick among the nearly 400 parks and historical sites run

by the National Park Service. Then sign up for one of more than 175,000 opportunities—from counting rare birds to working at a visitor center.

● **Time it takes** As little as a few hours or can be an ongoing commitment.

● **Contact** National Park Service (nps.gov/gettinginvolved).

Get in the kitchen and cook

● **How it works** Help low-income families learn to cook more nutritiously. If you're a culinary master or a licensed nutritionist, lead a class. Otherwise, become a class assistant and help with food prep and other tasks.

● **Time it takes** Two-hour class sessions once a week for six weeks.

● **Contact** Share Our Strength (800-969-4767; strength.org).

Inspire a middle schooler

● **How it works** Serve up the low-down on finance, gardening, rocket science—whatever your expertise may be—and expose disadvantaged students to career possibilities.

● **Time it takes** An afternoon of training, followed by classes that meet for 90 minutes a week for ten weeks.

● **Contact** Citizen Schools (617-695-2300; citizenschools.org).