



The Gateway Chronicle

Side-Effects of Volunteering may include Health, Happiness, and Longevity!

When you picture yourself “volunteering,” what comes to mind? Challenged by time constraints? Uncertain about your skills? Unsure where to begin your journey? Here at Gateway, we have rewarding volunteer opportunities for all ages and skill-levels, and we are finding that the National Park Service is not the only party benefiting from all of this positive energy. A recent report by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has confirmed what we have already noticed over the years: those who volunteer experience numerous health, career, and educational benefits associated with their efforts.

The report, entitled “The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research,” found that those who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression than those who do not. This is especially noticeable later in life. CNCS reports that volunteering provides older individuals with physical and social activity and a sense of purpose at a time when their social roles are changing. **How about taking a trip to lend a hand at a local organization instead of a trip to the doctor?**

You don't have to wait until you retire to participate in Gateway's programs. Volunteer habits that begin at a young age continue into adulthood. Volunteering as a family can provide invaluable ways to introduce children to educational resources in their communities. By participating in new experiences, children and young adults can gain new life skills or even find career opportunities. At Gateway, we inspire future aviation engineers through our Historic Aircraft Restoration Program; young marine-environment enthusiasts learn to sail with our Sailors Program; the Ecology Village teaches aspiring ecologists, scientists, and horticulturalists how to protect and preserve our natural resources.

What about the rest of us? Volunteering can advance careers by providing experience in new areas or cultivating existing interests, while introducing you directly to people in the field. Next time you contemplate volunteering, think of all the benefits you will gain by giving back to your community and country. Once you begin, you will have the chance to choose a path that is right for you. We hope you will consider devoting some time to Gateway's diverse cultural and environmental programs.

To find out more, visit <http://www.nps.gov/gate/supportyourpark/volunteer.htm> or email Keith White, Volunteer Program Coordinator at keith_white@nps.gov. We look forward to seeing you at the park! | By: Tara Eisenberg and Keith White



Top: Lou Barry receives an award for his service to the Historic Aircraft restoration Project (HARP).

Bottom: Volunteers Susan Gross and Dante DeMille reminisce about their time working at HARP.

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Dune Replanting at Fort Tilden Brings New Life to Sandy-Ravaged Areas

Fort Tilden, a beloved shoreline recreation area with historical significance and off-the-beaten-path charm suffered devastating damage from Superstorm Sandy. Tilden remains the only beach of the Gateway shoreline to stay closed in summer 2013. Despite losing miles of 15 foot high dunes and experiencing significant erosion and sand displacement, restorative efforts at Tilden are finally picking up momentum, with the vibrant energy of volunteers leading the charge.

The National Wildlife Federation partnered with the National Park Service in a three-part series of dune replanting efforts to restore habitat for wildlife and protection for the naturally beautiful beach.

During the month of May, groups of volunteers from Cushman Wakefield, Great Eastern Energy, and Goldman Sachs quietly descended onto the beach to learn more about the ecology of Gateway's hidden treasure, and play a big part in restoring their protective dune barriers. Ranger Dan Meharg patiently explained to the inquisitive groups how native plants seaside goldenrod and beach grass help to secure and stabilize the dunes while providing a feeding stopover for migrating monarch butterflies and seasonal nesting and protective ground for shorebirds like oystercatchers and endangered piping plovers.

Participating companies provided funding to purchase over 18,000

plants which volunteers tenderly tucked into 1,000 feet of dunes over a four week period. The young seedlings also require periodic watering, provided by volunteers post-planting.

Was this effort a success? Only time will tell if these dunes will grow back to their original glory, but on the third and final volunteer day, the participants marveled at a pair of oystercatchers protecting their new dune nest, and a piping plover was spotted scurrying by in the protected flat sand. With the continued efforts of volunteers and ecological education, we can keep our parks healthy and resilient, and help preserve them for future generations.

By: Tara Eisenberg



Help us restore vital habitats.

Learn about protecting Gateway's native flora and fauna.



A volunteer from Goldman Sachs plants native beach grass.

The piping plover, a protected species, returns to Fort Tilden's flattened former dunes to nest.