

# Age-Friendly Times

News from Teaneck's Age-Friendly Community Initiative  
Special Volunteerism Feature

## Volunteering Linked to Improved Health and Happiness

Imagine choosing one activity that could decrease your stress level, lift you out of depression, lower your risk of cardiovascular disease, and extend your lifespan.

Who wouldn't sign up for that?

Those are just some of the measurable health effects that studies have linked to volunteering. For older adults, there is also a long list of intangible benefits – increased community connections, a renewed sense of purpose, a chance to learn new skills, a way to set a good example for the grandkids. Then of course, there's the "helper's high" – that

release of endorphins that comes with doing good, and why surveys show people who volunteer on a regular basis also report higher rates of happiness.

Volunteering is such a key component of good health that the United Health Foundation uses it as a measure of overall well-being in its annual America's Health Rankings Senior Report. While New Jersey's older adult health ranking improved slightly in 2019, its rate of volunteerism declined. Only about 22 percent of New Jerseyans over 65 reported volunteering sometime in the previous **TIME on back**

## Older Adults Help in Many Ways in Teaneck Schools

Reading buddies. Math tutors. Lunch monitors. After-school club leaders. Clerical assistants. Teaneck Public Schools are seeking community volunteers to serve in a variety of roles, as part of a new vision the district is calling "The Teaneck Advantage."

"This 'advantage' includes all of our community volunteers who are so giving of their time, talent and treasure to help support the educational and emotional growth of our students," said Terry Corallo, director of community relations and chief of staff. "Our in-school volunteers are placed based on how they want to help work with our students or schools; and we welcome the Age-Friendly community to join us in this effort."

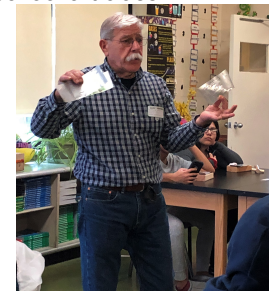
Volunteers may participate on a regular basis or a few times a year, depending on their interest and schedule. Those interested must attend a training session and undergo a criminal background check, the cost of which is reimbursed by the school district.

**For more information or to apply, please call Ms. Corallo at 201-833-5498**



*Above at Bryant School:* Retired business analyst Wallace Lee serves as an aide in pre-school classes; Suzanne Berelson, a former kindergarten teacher, puts her longtime experience to good use helping kindergarteners with a counting exercise.

*Below at Thomas Jefferson Middle School:* Longtime bridge partners Barbara Ganin and Allan Bauer teach the card game to students after school; former art teacher Frank Ottochian leads an after-school art class.



**TIME from front**

12 months. That percentage puts New Jersey near the bottom of the rankings – 45<sup>th</sup> compared to #1 Utah, where nearly 45 percent of older adults volunteered.

As we look for ways to make Teaneck more age-friendly, a crucial goal is to connect older adults with volunteer opportunities, not only as a way to stay active and healthy, but also to

keep them connected to younger generations and people from different walks of life. Active older adults also could help their vulnerable peers with tasks such as food shopping and home maintenance or by paying an occasional friendly visit. Volunteers are essential to the continued vibrancy of any community, especially an age-friendly one.

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*To Boost Volunteerism, We Should Change the Way We Look at Retirement*

The organization Bergen Volunteers has long sought to connect people who want to give their time with people or organizations who need it. Two years ago, the non-profit decided to zero in on retirees as a potential source of new volunteer blood.

Its “Redefining Retirement” program has since placed 100 older adults in positions with non-profit organizations in the region. Many participants say their new volunteer roles are as valuable to their own lives as they are to the people they help, said Lynne Algrant, chief executive officer of Bergen Volunteers.

“It is incredibly life-affirming to be busy and to be useful and to feel connected to a community,” Algrant said.

Retiring can be particularly isolating for people whose work lives had become their primary social connections, especially for those who had commuted to New York City and had fewer ties in their local communities.

Even those who raised families in Teaneck can feel less connected after aging out of the school and youth sports volunteering roles they once played.

Volunteering in later years “provides order and structure to people who might have lost that after they stopped working or after their kids moved out of the house. It’s very easy for your circle to shrink rapidly,” Algrant said.

Some retirees offer expertise gained from their careers while others develop new skills in positions vastly different from their other life experiences.

“So often when we talk about older adults,

we talk about the needs they have and not about the talents they have,” Algrant said. “Here in Bergen County, we have so much talent and wisdom and experience and it would really be a waste to have it tucked away playing mahjong and golf.”

**To learn more about the Redefining Retirement program, call 201-489-9454, ext. 206, or log onto [www.bergenvolunteers.org](http://www.bergenvolunteers.org)**

Volunteers are needed in many local organizations. Here are some others

**Brightside Manor**

Help with exercise, entertainment and activities  
201-692-1000, [info@seniorhousingservices.org](mailto:info@seniorhousingservices.org)

**Jewish Family & Children’s Services of N.NJ**

Friendly visits, meal delivery, and more  
201-837-9090, [info@jfcnnj.org](mailto:info@jfcnnj.org)

**Helping Hands Food Pantry**

Pantry staff/ office help/ donation pick-ups  
201-837-1600 (x1825), [katz07666@gmail.com](mailto:katz07666@gmail.com)

**CHEER Service**

Friendly visits/ grocery shopping/ errands  
201-489-9454 (x203)  
[mogden@bergenvolunteers.org](mailto:mogden@bergenvolunteers.org)

**CHORE Service**

Help with minor home repairs/chores  
201-489-7790, [chore@bergenvolunteers.org](mailto:chore@bergenvolunteers.org)



[www.agefriendlyteaneck.org](http://www.agefriendlyteaneck.org)