

RSVP NEWS Holiday Edition

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10 Ideas to Spread Cheer

- compliments of Create the Good, AARP

The holidays are cheerful, but they can also be a busy time of year for many, with crowded schedules, shopping and stress. That doesn't mean you have to lose the giving spirit!

The best gifts often aren't material ones. Small acts of kindness that show you're thinking of someone can mean more—and cost less—than a physical item. Write a thank you note to a local volunteer. Offer a friend a ride to the airport. Donate anonymously. Even the smallest acts of good can go a long way and bring a smile to someone's face.

These 10 ideas make it easy to keep up the kindness this holiday season.

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- 1. Thank volunteers.** If you're unable to make a volunteer commitment this season, thank those who can. Send a note to your local fire dept or a thank you letter to shelter volunteers. Or make sure those Salvation Army volunteers ringing holiday bells stay warm too with gloves, hats and coffee or hot cocoa (and donate to their cause!).
- 2. Mind your manners.** When you're out and about this holiday season, small acts of kindness can make a world of difference. Say thank you to your postal worker, let someone go in front of you in the crowded grocery line or smile at a stressed-out employees who may be overworked.
- 3. Buy—or bake—a little extra.** Another way to spread cheer with out breaking the bank—or your schedule—is by doing a little extra of something you were already planning. Baking Christmas cookies? Make an extra batch for the local nursing home. Cooking up a big meal? Drop some off at the homeless shelter. Or if you're doing some shopping, purchase toys for children in need. There are plenty of programs, like the Salvation Army's Angel Tree , that can make sure your gift gets to a child in need.

10 Ways to Spread Cheer (cont.)

4. **Ease someone's travel.** Holiday months mean peak travel time—and the stress that comes with it. Give a friend or neighbor ride to the airport or train station, or offer to pick someone up. It will make a big difference amid overcrowded transit and delayed flight times!

5. **Spread the warmth.** Heating and utility costs during winter months can climb quickly. Is there someone you know who's short on cash? A family in the neighborhood going through a tough time? Call the electric company and anonymously pay their gas or electric bill for the month.

6. **Be a friend.** The holidays may not be full of joy for everyone. They can be a lonely time for someone who has lost a loved one or doesn't have nearby friends and family. If you know someone who finds the holidays tough, make sure to include them. Invite them to your gatherings, or just spend some extra time with them one on one. Be there when they need you, but know that if they want to be alone sometimes, that's OK too.

7. **Donate anonymously.** It doesn't take long to go online, search out a cause that matters to you and make a donation. Before you donate, though, make sure you do your research. Use these tips to give back wisely.

8. **Write a letter to strengthen bonds.** Many people have made a difference in your life. This season, remember to tell them. Write a letter to friend or loved one, or reconnect with someone you haven't spoken to in a while. Expressing how you feel and how much they mean to you is the perfect holiday gift.

9. **Sing a song.** What's more festive, spirited and soothing than music? If you don't know of a caroling group already, gather one together to make rounds in your neighborhood or take your tunes to an assisted living facility and fill the halls with song.

10. **Foster a pet.** Make a new friend this season by fostering a cat or dog. Animal shelters can get chilly in winter weather, which is a great reason to take a pet back to your warm home. Do you love dogs, but not sure if you're ready for the commitment? Or maybe you want to teach the kids the responsibilities that come with owning pet. For these reasons and more, taking care of an animal is a great way to spread the love this season.



Spotlight on RSVP Volunteer, Jacyra Guard



Jacyra Guard, one of the excellent volunteers for Canopy of Neighbors* (CON), selected this quote from Eleanor Roosevelt as her favorite, "Beautiful young people are accidents of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art." She grew up in Louisville, Kentucky with her grandmother as her "third parent." Her family moved to Washington, DC when she was thirteen. She volunteered as a visitor to the elderly in the eighth and ninth grades. Her word of choice for the aging members of our community is our "elders." Isn't it a pleasure to have someone with this attitude volunteering for us?

Jacyra was involved with CON even before this organization was fully functioning. Early on, she joined the volunteer committee and drafted the volunteer handbook. She helped to set up some basic procedures, spread sheets and computer systems to react to calls. She brings some of the talents and skills she used in her management position as Chief Social Welfare Examiner with the Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS). By the end of her career there she oversaw assistance to the difficult-to-serve populations which included one special team for grandparents parenting grandchildren. Her job was most exciting when working under a transformational commissioner who led the organization to develop a scenario for the future. She says it was a great learning experience to see the implementation of much of what she had written. She retired after 35 years at DSS.

Jacyra came to Buffalo in 1966. She has one daughter and a granddaughter who live in Amherst, Massachusetts. Jacyra began her education at the College of New Rochelle and then earned a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology at the University at Buffalo and a master's degree from Buffalo State College (now SUNY Buffalo State) where she was in the pilot class for the multi-disciplinary master's degree in human services management.

In retirement she seeks out experiences that include continuous learning, creativity and writing. She believes that we should look for a rainbow of choices in retirement because it's a time for operating from a place of joy and new experiences. Initially she turned to the huge directory of activities offered by RSVP. She loves reading the Buffalo News "live" with the Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service. She served on the board of the Jung Center and has been reading with their women's study group for almost twenty years. She organized and manages their poetry writing program. She enjoys being an active docent at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, especially the continuous learning that is involved. She helps manage the Crane Library Book Club and she started an adult discussion group at Crane called Socrates Café. This summer, she wrote a series of 19 book reviews that are posted online at the Buffalo and Erie County Library. At CON, she loves driving and talking to the elders in her little blue car. She finds that all these activities fulfill her goals for the second half of life – a realization of the unrealized.

- *Marian Deutschman, fellow volunteer*

*Canopy of Neighbors is a community of individuals empowering each other to live independently and enriching the wider community by sharing their wisdom, experience and energy. CON serves the 14222 and 14209 zip codes. They recognize and hail the volunteers for their contribution to the program and members. Without them, the Canopy of Neighbors would not exist. The volunteers are the lifeblood of the Canopy of Neighbors and are revered for their commitment and allegiance to Canopy of Neighbors. They are actively seeking volunteers to assist in many capacities, particularly volunteer drivers. Please contact Kathy Daigler at kathy@canopyofneighbors.org or (716)235-8133. Don't forget to mention RSVP!



Holiday Opportunities



Many of our partners and other community service agencies are in need of extra help not only this time of year but, all year round. Here are some seasonal one-time volunteer opportunities to do with family and friends. Hopefully your experience will lead to volunteering and/or donating to an organization regularly! If you chose to volunteer for any of these opportunities, be sure to let Carrie know so we can count your hours.

Mid November – December 24th

Salvation Army

75 locations across Western New York from East Aurora to Clarence

888-6220

BELL RINGERS

Bell ring for a minimum of 2 hours at a day, time, and location of your choice. All that is needed is a friendly smile! Ages 13 and up can man their own kettle. Sign up at www.registertoring.com OR call 888-6220

December 2nd -24th

Hospice Buffalo

989-2360

GIFT WRAPPING

Annual gift wrapping event at the Boulevard Mall. Seeking people who love to wrap gift beautifully, are outgoing and enjoy being in the retail setting. Need 3-4 volunteers per shift, multiple shifts available. Please contact the Hospice Volunteer Office at 989-2360 for available shifts.

December 4th – 23rd

Boxes of Love

Multiple Locations

854-1001

GIFT WRAPPING AND PREPARING BAGS OF FOOD

Boxes of Love Warehouse (Jericho Road) 184 Barton Street - use side entrance, Buffalo, NY 14213

Find the schedule here: <http://www.buffalodreamcenter.org/tbol.php?content=BOLwrap>

DISTRIBUTING BOXES OF LOVE

Boxes of Love are donated items of food, winter wear and toys for disadvantaged families in the area. Volunteers gather at outdoor sites to handout the items to registered families.

Find the schedule here: <http://www.buffalodreamcenter.org/tbol.php?content=BOLsites>

Donations are always needed! Drop off sites can be found here: <http://www.buffalodreamcenter.org/tbol.php?content=BOLdonations>

DECEMBER 5TH

B - Team Buffalo
 1168 Seneca Street
 Buffalo, NY 14210
 (716) 202-8326
info@bteambuffalo.com

**CITY OF LIGHT**

Each holiday season, members of B-Team Buffalo organize a grassroots event called City of Light. The goal of the initiative is to decorate a neighborhood in the city so that it shines for the holidays as a nod to the turn of the previous century, when Buffalo was called the "City of Light." Not only will teams be adding a sparkling touch to houses in the neighborhood, B-Team Buffalo will be hosting a winter carnival, providing the neighborhood children with gifts (from Santa!), games, prizes, crafts, and other activities throughout the day as we gather the residents and volunteers together for a celebration and tree-lighting ceremony. Individuals and groups are welcome to sign up for this event. Three 4-hour shifts are available: morning, carnival, and afternoon.

December 5th, 9-12 pm

Buffalo Audubon Society, Inc.
 Beaver Meadow Audubon Center
 1610 Welch Rd
 North Java NY 14113
 (585)-457-3228
keller@buffaloaudubon.org

Volunteers are needed to help with admission, cooking breakfast, serving, crafts and more.

December 7th-29th

Buffalo City Mission
 100 E. Tupper
 Buffalo
 (716)854-8181 x404, x419, x438

Hambone Express Telephone Reservationist are the volunteers who take phoned-in Christmas meal reservations from those in need in our community. The reservationists are needed during the week of December 7th to 11th and 14th to 18st between the hours of 9:30am-12:00pm and 12:30pm-3:30pm.

135 Delivery Teams are needed to deliver 4000 meals into the community Christmas morning. There are many times available between 8:00am and 11:30am. Bring your family or a friend and share in a time of giving as you meet the food needs of others this Christmas!

Do a food drive for green beans or be one of 200 people making 5 dozen cookies and share your Christmas Cookie Favorites with the community in need (no nuts please).

12,000 cookies are needed to complete each Christmas meal to be delivered to the elderly and community in need! Get the Christmas Cookie flyer here.



Buffalo City Mission cont. ::Christmas Volunteer and Gift Donation Needs:

Christmas gifts and large and x-large gift bags are needed for men, women and children. If you would like to adopt some of the items on the wish lists or help to meet the decorator bags needed for our residents, please contact the Volunteer Department and bring a bit of Christmas cheer to all those at the Buffalo City Mission this Christmas.

Christmas gift sorters are needed starting December 14th to help sort and organize the gift donations for the women and children of Cornerstone Manor. Make a difference and join the festivities.

Help cleanup after Christmas Day... after the fun, help is needed on December 28th and 29th from 9:00am to 11:30am to tidy up Cornerstone Manor.

December 20th 1 –3pm

Compeer Greater Buffalo
135 Delaware Avenue
Suite 210, Buffalo
883-3331

Seeking someone or a small group to provide music and/or a sing along. Only needs to be for about 1/2 hour.

Compeer recruits, screens, and matches trained volunteers and mentors in one-to-one supportive friendship relationships with children, adults, military veterans and seniors who are struggling with mental illness. Our wonderful volunteers and mentors become positive role models, help raise self-esteem, increase social and communication skills, and encourage independence for their Compeer friends.



We wish you all a very happy and safe Holiday! Thank you for another year of your dedication. We wish you a new year filled with peace, joy, and the same happiness you bring to the world.

Sincerely,
Pat and Carrie