

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

I would like to get involved in community service, but I don't have much free time, and I'm not sure how to get started. What should I do?



PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

You don't need large blocks of time to be able to serve in your community. Some projects—such as knitting newborn hats—can be done in shorter time increments.

When I am seeking opportunities for community service, my best resource is prayer. As I kneel and express a desire to serve despite my limitations, I am always reminded that the Lord knows perfectly my abilities and time constraints as well as the needs of others within my sphere of influence. This helps me trust that the Spirit will bring to my attention anything He knows I can do that is needed. After taking the time to pray, I am often surprised at how quickly I am presented with service opportunities.

Ginger Churchill, Utah

I find service projects I can do at home on my own schedule. I sew and tie quilts for terminally ill children in hospitals and those who have experienced trauma in accidents. I also knit newborn baby hats to donate to a home for teenage mothers and a neonatal clinic at a local hospital. It's amazing how 10 to 15 minutes here and there can add up to getting a large project done. "By small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6).

Rebecca Thomas, Washington

With four young children, I didn't think I had enough time to get involved with community service, even though it was something I really wanted to do. I started by asking my children's teachers if they needed help in the classroom. I let the teachers know when I could come and how long I could be there. They always had something for me to do—grading papers, helping students, making copies, etc. I started out small and then added as my children got older and I could do more.

Kim McAllister, Michigan

Identify your talents, interests, and passions and match them with local community needs. Do you enjoy working with animals, gardens, or youth? Do you have a specific skill like building Web sites, planning events, or handling finances? When you get involved with something that you are passionate about, the limits of time are much more easily overcome as your service becomes fun and fulfilling.

Sbarilee Guest, Utah

Read out of books, magazines, or the scriptures to residents at a local nursing home. Have them reminisce about their early lives. Deliver water to residents, work in the beauty shop, or just visit. With the approval of the staff, consider taking an appropriate pet with you.

Tom Stogdill, Indiana

If you would like to donate to a food bank but have limited finances, don't feel that you can't afford enough of a donation to make a difference. Buy one extra food item on each trip to the store. After a few weeks, you will be surprised at your collection.

Lynelle Merritt, Idaho

Teachers often appreciate having experts in a field come and give demonstrations. If you have a

particular skill that would be interesting to share with students, call your local school and discuss it with a teacher who teaches classes in that field. When my son returned from his mission in Guatemala, he went upon request to his sibling's classroom to share with the students his experiences living in that area and culture. The class enjoyed his presentation, and my son left appreciating the opportunity to teach about a place that had become part of his life.

Jocelyn Parker Parmer, Utah

Donating blood has been an easy and rewarding way for me to give community service. It takes relatively little time, can be done on a regular basis, costs nothing, is essentially painless, and is a great incentive to maintain good health (so that donations will be accepted). If health or other restrictions limit donating, consider volunteering to organize or assist with a community blood drive. Volunteers can sponsor and publicize drives, recruit donors, coordinate volunteer service, and work with other local

OTHERS NEED YOUR HELP



"Along your pathway of life you will observe that you are not the only traveler. There

are others who need your help.

There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save."

President Thomas S. Monson, "How Firm a Foundation," *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 68.

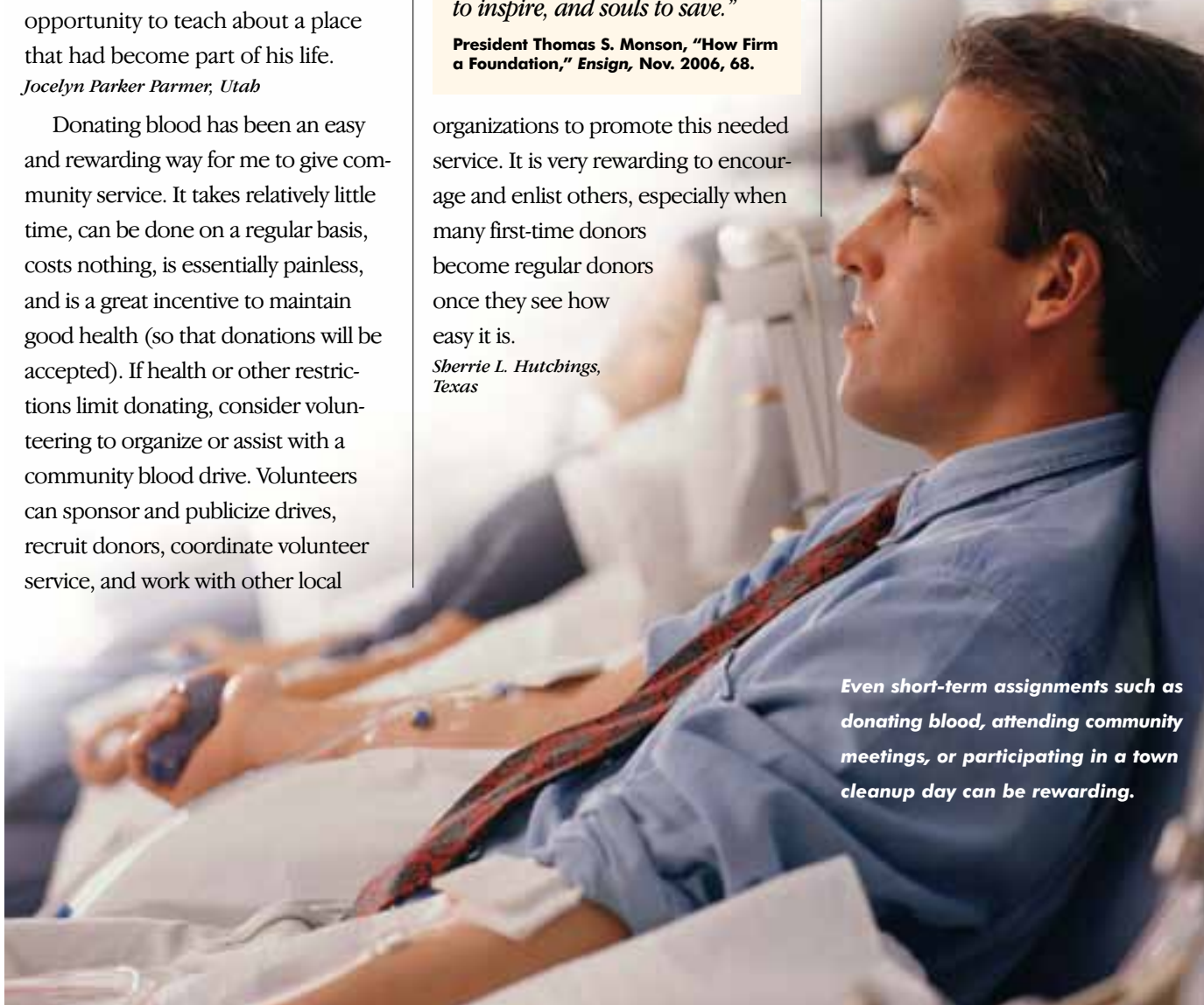
organizations to promote this needed service. It is very rewarding to encourage and enlist others, especially when many first-time donors become regular donors once they see how easy it is.

Sherrie L. Hutchings, Texas

Volunteer for involvement in a short-term responsibility such as a town celebration or cleanup day. During major election years, attend community meetings. Here you may become a delegate to a county or state convention or may be assigned to be a judge at the voting booths. These short-term assignments can be rewarding.

Elaine Calvert, Utah

Even short-term assignments such as donating blood, attending community meetings, or participating in a town cleanup day can be rewarding.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Community service doesn't take time; it takes ingenuity! Start with your current responsibilities and multiply—rather than divide—your time.

• **Your Church calling:** My CTR class collected food for a local food pantry. The folks at the pantry loved being let in on the fun, and the Primary children got a taste of service.

• **Your work responsibilities:** Many corporations are interested in contributing to the community. Ask if you can get involved. You might organize a team of coworkers to walk in a charity fund-raiser or participate in a town cleanup.

• **Your neighborhood:** Join with other local congregations for a service

Look for opportunities that might exist within your Church calling, your work responsibilities, and your neighborhood.

To find volunteer opportunities in your community for adults, youth, children, families, and groups, inquire at a local school, a library, or the city council. Contacts at these places may be able to direct you to a local volunteer hub, nonprofit organizations, or Web sites listing volunteer opportunities.

For more ideas, check with local institutions and causes. For example:

- Animal shelters
- Arts programs
- Churches
- Homeless shelters
- Hospitals
- Local governments
- Museums
- Nursing homes and care centers
- Parks and recreation centers
- Political and civic organizations
- Programs for children and youth

project. This lets participants work shoulder to shoulder with other people of faith in building a better world.

Ideas for service projects can be found on volunteer Web sites, which often display results tailored to your specific geographic location, group size, and schedule. Your local service council or the community service department of a nearby high school or college may also have project ideas.

Marci McPhee, Massachusetts

Service is not limited to organizations. If you notice individuals who need help, reach out to them. Sometimes you may be the only one who is aware and has the ability and time to do something about it.

Linda Turner, Utah ■

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

An upcoming Questions and Answers feature will focus on the following question: *What are some ways I can strengthen myself and progress spiritually when my spouse is not supportive of my Church activity?*

If you'd like to contribute your ideas and experiences, please label your submission "spiritual progression" and follow the submission guidelines under "Do You Have a Story to Tell?" in the contents pages at the beginning of the magazine. Please limit responses to 500 words, and submit them by July 20.



PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT CASEY