

“Voluntourism” Opportunities and “Helping” New Orleans

Listed below are some organizations currently engaged in organizing, hosting or identifying community service projects for people visiting New Orleans, contributing to the city’s recovery. These details were supplied by the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Habitat For Humanity

Contact: 504-861-2077

www.habitat-nola.org/volunteer@habitat-nola.org

This group will build homes for many years to come. Most visible site is Musician’s Village in the upper 9th Ward, but they have sites all around the metropolitan area.

- Work day begins at 7:30 a.m., and Habitat provides instruction in the morning, then an entire day of work (or more) with a break for lunch. Work ends at 2:30 p.m., with clean-up until 3:00 p.m.
- Lunch must be arranged for by the group. Habitat has catering companies they can recommend.
- Habitat can assist with ordering team t-shirts.
- Any communications-related issues must be coordinated with Habitat for Humanity.
- All equipment is on site.
- Transportation must be arranged for by the group.
- Groups must be comprised of 15 people and can be as large as hundreds.
- No building activity on Sunday or Monday.

Catholic Charities

Contact: Shannon Murphy, Director of Volunteers

504-310-6962, smurphy@archdiocese-n.org

www.ccano.org

This multi-faceted organization serves a variety of organizations and needs, including response and recovery, housing, healthcare and education.

- Volunteer opportunities range from ½ day activities to 2 day opportunities, from assisting at Second Harvesters Food Bank to helping repaint and repair a person’s home damaged from Katrina.

Beacon of Hope

Contact: email Director of Volunteers, Liz Widener at Liz@lakewoodbeacon.org, (504) 312-2748

www.lakewoodbeacon.org

Founded in the Lakeview neighborhood, but they have expanded to other neighborhoods in the Lakeview region and have established offices and projects in the Ninth Ward and the Pontilly neighborhood. What is needed are unlimited numbers of volunteers willing to get very dirty.

- The types of tasks include: light work helping with sign-in or distributing trashbags; medium strength required to pick up and bag or stack trash; volunteers with strong arms, legs and backs for digging out shrubs; and chainsaw- savvy volunteers to cut down dead shrubs and small trees. Job benefits include immediate gratification of seeing the results of your work and knowing that you helped someone and that you helped in New Orleans' recovery.
- Equipment is provided.
- A group can provide their own catering experience, t-shirts, etc.
- All equipment is on site.
- Transportation is necessary to the gathering site.

- Beacon's team is flexible on start and finish time during the day, but the ideal length of work is 3-4 hours.
- Volunteers are asked to bring gloves and goggles, if possible, but can be pre-arranged for with a nominal donation of \$4-\$5 per person.
- Beacon of Hope asks for groups to confirm number of volunteers 2 weeks in advance.
- Beacon of Hope can work with groups as small as 10-20 volunteers, and as large as 200, although no more than 100 is ideal. Larger groups may have to spread out across a few city blocks while working, depending on the project's needs.

City Year

Contact: Chris Flood, 504-344-5153, cflood@cityyear.org (email is the best for initial contact)
<http://www.cityyear.org/sites/louisiana/>

City Year is a group of young people dedicating a year of life to service, in New Orleans as it relates to recovery. They can help to identify opportunities for service and coordinate the activity at various locations around the city including schools, other organizations with needs. They do charge a fee per head to cover cost of equipment, and other needs including transportation, catering, etc. For the academic year 2007-2008, City Year plans on focusing on the needs of the Recovery Schools District primarily.

City Park, New Orleans

Contact: <http://neworleanscitypark.com/volunteer.html>

To schedule a volunteer day or get more information, contact Lisa Laraway at llaraway@nocp.org or (504) 483-9459 (email preferred).

City Park sustained \$43 million dollars in damages from Hurricane Katrina, and staffing level has gone from 260 to just over 30. They just don't have the funds or the staff to do many of the things necessary to maintain the park (e.g., pick up trash and debris). Volunteers are essential for the recovery of the Park and for the Park to take its place in the cultural and recreational rebirth of New Orleans.

What you need to know:

- They have worked with groups numbering from 20 to 900. Groups of 20-50 are the easiest for them to manage.
- They almost always have at least one staff person working with the volunteer group on their day of service.
- Given their financial situation, they ask convention and corporate groups to make a financial contribution to the park that will, at a minimum, cover the cost of supplies and materials used on their volunteer day. Supplies and materials can include paint, mulch, shovels, rakes, loppers, plant material, trash bags, etc. Contributions vary but they tend to average between \$25 and \$50 per person. Most companies send them a check and then they purchase supplies. They also have an inventory of in house supplies that can be used for some projects.
- They have found work days of between 4 and 6 hours to be optimum.
- Volunteers are encouraged to dress appropriately (no open-toed sandals!), wear a hat, and apply sunscreen and insect repellent.
- Volunteers are responsible for providing any beverages they wish to drink and food they wish to consume. Bring plenty of liquids year round, but particularly during the summer months.

- Some sections of the park do not have restroom facilities at present. Volunteer groups may need to rent port-a-lets (average cost is \$100 per day per).
- They have many different projects at the park that will vary depending on the financial contribution, the number of people in your group, the day on which you are coming, and the equipment available. Volunteers may paint, clear shorelines (we have 22 miles of shorelines), pick up trash and debris, plant, mulch, or string Christmas lights.

The work is rewarding: Groups come to the park and tackle an area that needs work. Four or six hours later, the area is much improved.

New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD)

Contact: Larry Barabino

New Orleans City Hall

Tel: 504-382-3663

lbarabino@cityofno.com

The New Orleans Recreation Department is the official department for youth programs . A majority of their parks and playspots were damaged in the flood. They are in need of volunteers to help clean up and restore parks and playspots. They are also in needs of youth sports equipment, playground equipment, uniform, and sporting goods and supplies.

Hands On New Orleans

Contact: Sam McKenzie, smckenzie@handsonnetwork.org

volunteer@handsonneworleans.org

www.handsonneworleans.org <<http://www.handsonneworleans.org/>>

Much like City Year, Hands On New Orleans can help identify a project, often for groups of all ages. All skill levels are needed. A non-profit Disaster Response project of Hands On Network, in partnership with the Points of Life Foundation. We are committed to the long term recovery and rebuilding of communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Volunteer projects focus on rebuilding activities that are overwhelming in there need and providing services that would otherwise be unmet.

- Current projects include house gutting, mold remediation, rebuilding, animal shelter support and mentoring in schools, in addition to other community outreach projects. Hands On New Orleans understands the interdependence of the various elements of the city that have been affected by Hurricane Katrina.
- Volunteer projects evolve in a "makes-sense" format as they engage in the renewal of those elements.
- Can provide housing to both short and long term volunteers.
- There is a fee per person charge to defray cost of equipment.
- Working in a number of neighborhood of New Orleans.

Animal Rescue New Orleans

504-571-1900

animalrescueneworleans.org

Animal Rescue New Orleans (ARNO) is an organization created and dedicated to the rescue and aid of abandoned and homeless animals in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and Mississippi, including responding to the immediate needs of those animals in need of medical care, or who have been neglected, abused and deprived of love. ARNO promotes the foster, adoption, and reunion of pets with caretakers, as well as spaying/neutering of all companion animals.

Donation opportunities

Operation Kids/Brees Dream Foundation initiative, led by Saints Quarterback Drew Brees and his wife, Brittany

Project seeks to improve/enhance the lives of children in New Orleans, including the building of athletic field at Lusher High School, supporting Best Buddies, building a Beacon of Hope Resource Center, supporting and helping to restore New Orleans Recreation Department Playgrounds, building the Edible Schoolyard at Green Charter School, and other designated projects.

Contact: Kristian Sonnier, 504-581-7191, ksonnier@peteramayer.com

Tippitina's Foundation Instruments-a-Comin'

Dedicated to providing New Orleans public schools and professional musicians with instruments for performances, school bands and instruction. Also rebuilding Fats Domino's house among other projects.

Toll-Free: 866-372-0512

Fax: 504-309-7928

Musician's Village/Habitat

Melissa Mansuelis is the volunteer coordinator and her email is volunteer@habitat-nola.org. You can also visit the Habitat website and link from there. Their phone number is 504-861-4121.

Contributing to the Local Economy (PS from SCCR President-Elect)

Most of us don't have the time to volunteer, but you can make a difference and contribute to the revival of the city by shopping and being generous as a visitor. Shopping at smaller locally-owned shops rather than at the big chain stores you can help local workers. That means not just browsing, but buying something. Think of upcoming birthdays, anniversaries, etc. for which you'll need to buy presents, and consider shopping ahead in New Orleans for those gifts.

You can help New Orleanians on the individual level by being generous. Leave a couple bucks extra tip for your waiter (he may have lost his home after Katrina, or may have to commute an hour each way to wait tables because he can't afford the inflated post-Katrina rents). Tip the limo driver, the hotel room cleaning staff, the taxi driver a couple extra bucks. Put a dollar in the hat for the street musician. Small acts of humanity toward people we usually ignore or take for granted on convention trips might be the best way you can "help." Look at these people not as victims, but as amazingly strong and courageous, because that's what they are. *Our hotel liaison and food/beverage director, along with most of the hotel staff, stayed at the Le Pavillon straight through and after Katrina, at personal danger and financial sacrifice, to take care of their stranded out-of-town hotel guests. They would do the same for you as their guests.*