



Why and How to Get Involved in Your Community

It's understandable if you feel too overloaded to consider volunteering. The first few years in real estate can be hectic and command much of your attention. But you should consider the potential benefits of volunteering. Getting involved in your community can be very rewarding. Volunteering can create opportunities to network with other real estate professionals and potential clients, build relationships in your local business community, and find an avenue to express yourself outside of work.

[Familiarize yourself with REALTOR® Magazine's Good Neighbor Awards](#) to learn about the inspirational work being done by your fellow practitioners around the country and how you can get involved.

How to Get Started

Your first step is to discover an area of service that you find fulfilling, and this may not be what you originally expected. Some people start working with the elderly only to switch to assisting poor families or the homeless, while others work with children or the disabled.

Many volunteer organizations hold one-off events such as fundraisers, field trips, or building renovation projects that only require a one-day commitment. These are good opportunities to see if you are well matched to both the organization that's involved and the people it serves.

Once you determine how you want to get involved in your community—perhaps by tutoring a new immigrant in English, being a mentor, or delivering meals to local elderly citizens—make sure you don't overestimate the time you have to offer.

“Start small,” says [Gil Gillenwater](#), a 2000 Good Neighbor Awards winner. “Don't take on too much at once or you'll burn out.”

During these first years in your career, don't worry about the amount of time you volunteer. People will be more impressed by your consistency than they will be by the volume of your aspirations. Real estate is local, so the totality of your actions in the community will contribute to your reputation as a reliable businessperson and upstanding citizen.