

Narrator: In honor of National Volunteer Week, the free Bridges Helpdesk for blind low vision youth, in collaboration with Sky's the Limit Communications, bring to you this five-part series on the benefits of volunteering. The Bridges Helpdesk for blind low vision youth logo shows horizontal view of a suspension bridge erected over a body of water. The word "Helpdesk" appears centered below the base of the bridge and above the water.

Eileen Rivera Ley: Hello, this is Eileen Rivera Ley from Blind Savvy USA, and this week, we have a very special podcast series for you. We are going to talk about all the wonderful reasons One should volunteer. And we are going to interview some wonderful volunteers who happened to be blind, to learn about how volunteering has touched and moved their lives. So we look forward to spending the week with you and sharing with you all the wonderful benefits of volunteering. In addition to my presentation, David DeNotaris of Sky's the Limit Communications will also be sharing his reasons for volunteering. So, looking forward to the journey.

Narrator: Welcome to Part 1.

Eileen Rivera Ley: Some interesting statistics about volunteering. 25% of Americans volunteer their time. \$167 billion are saved by organizations because of the efforts of volunteers. That's a lot of money. Young people are wonderful volunteers. About 18% of people between 20 and 24 volunteer some of their time.

David DeNotaris: Alright, so popcorn.

Eileen Rivera Ley: How many reasons to volunteer?

David DeNotaris: All right. Let's go. Let's go. Let's jump to it. Let me see. So what do you, what do you got? Why should we bother? Why should we volunteer? Make friends. That's a good one, right?

Hindley Williams: Resume building.

David DeNotaris: Resume building. Love it. What else?

Michael Bullis: Yeah, and never say on your resume that it was a volunteer activity. If you do something and it's volunteer, you just put it on your resume.

Eileen Rivera Ley: Oh, that's a wonderful tip. Experience. Right?

Michael Bullis: Right. It's none of their business how much you got paid or who paid you or who didn't pay you.

Hindley Williams: Right. Right. Just put it down as an experience. Yeah.

Chris Nusbaum: Well, I know that it helps with leadership experience.

Michael Bullis: Absolutely.

Eileen Rivera Ley: All kinds of skills.

Michael Bullis: The other thing is just making connections. Making connections with people always leads to good things over time. The more people you know, the more opportunities you have to connect with them, the better

David DeNotaris: I love it, Mike. Great job, very good. Why else, why else? I know that it's created opportunities for me that have led to jobs.

Hindley Williams: Absolutely.

Eileen Rivera Ley: And we do make the world a better place by volunteering. We save the organizations lots and lots of money.

David DeNotaris: (Sound of descent)

Eileen Rivera Ley: Oh, you don't think that's a good answer?

(Laughter)

David DeNotaris: That's okay. That's fine.

Eileen Rivera Ley: I have to object to that.

Hindley Williams: I like your answer, Eileen.

David DeNotaris: All right. Very good, Hindley, very good.

Juhi Narula: I'd say personal growth. I know I have learned a lot about myself just by volunteering.

David DeNotaris: Personal growth, love it.

Hindley Williams: In so many ways too, you know, even including, you know, just you as a person, but also as your blindness skills too I think really expand, and you can really get into situations where you can challenge yourself.

David DeNotaris: I know, I know that I, you know, it forced me, no other way to say it, it forced me to become a better traveler, because I had to get to the experience and I learned travel skills.

Michael Bullis: I think it's an important thing to try and understand ahead of time when you're planning on volunteering where you might be a value, because generally the people that you're going to volunteer for aren't going to know. So you're saying to them, "Oh, I don't know, just, you know, just put me wherever," that's going to be very confusing if you're blind, if you have significant disabilities of other kinds. What is it that you think you might be most useful for? So sometimes, it's helpful to just go in and do a

tour of the operation ahead of time and sort of learn like, what are all the jobs and then you might get some idea.

Chris Nusbaum: If you're able to. It depends on the project. Sometimes you're able to do that and sometimes you're not.

Michael Bullis: That's right, sometimes not. And I just think, you know, the frustrating part for a lot of employers or, churches or something is, "we don't have any idea what you could do and we don't want to hurt your feelings by giving you a job you can't do."

Chris Nusbaum: Well one thing going off of that I was gonna say is it's a great opportunity to kind of shift the narrative or the perception about blindness without even trying, because you get, at least in my experience, I get put by doing a service opportunity in the position of doing the serving rather than being the one who is served, which forces other people to rethink their ideas about blindness. And I'm not doing, in that situation, I'm not doing a special effort just to educate the public. I'm doing that while doing something that's more important to me, which is doing some kind of service, doing some volunteering, which is even more rewarding. So I get two things done at once.

David DeNotaris: I love it, I love it. Thank you, Chris.

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