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By [Sina Lewis](#) November 17, 2014

[16 Awesome Volunteer Opportunities in Los Angeles for Angelenos Looking to Give Something Back](#)

254

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Because we all really do like L.A. I think each of us, from time to time, ask ourselves how can do things to give back to this amazing city of ours.

But what form should our charity take? After all, there are so many organizations and causes out there that need help, how does one figure out where to donate time and/or resources? What's really going to make a difference? Well, the truth is that's really up to you and what you're interested in.

Do you enjoy arts and culture? Do you have a soft spot for animals? Or do you have an interest in education. After you determine your interests it's time to search for the ideal volunteer organization. And that's where we come in.

Consider this list a starter compilation of of awesome volunteer opportunities if you're looking to give back to the city of angels. And even if you don't find the exact cause that's right for you on the list, it ought to give you some excellent ideas moving forward. Either way, the most important thing isn't *what* you're donating your time to, it's the *choice* to donate at all.

After all, as JFK once said...

“Ask not what your country (or city) can do for you, ask what you can do for your country (or city)”

Volunteer to Help the Homeless

Los Angeles inhabits enough homeless individuals to fit into Dodger Stadium. Unfortunately, the crisis is not improving; the number has increased by 16% in the last two years. That said, here is a list of 7 organizations that are helping to end homelessness in our city.



Credit: The Giving Spirit on [Facebook](#)

1. Homeboy Industries

Homeboy Industries serves high-risk, formerly gang-involved men and women with free services and programs, and operates several social enterprises that serve as job-training sites. Documentary buffs may have seen this organization in the documentary by Academy Award winner Freida Lee Mock: [G-Dog the Movie](#).

Supporting their social enterprise is a great way to give back. Keep in mind Homeboy Foods makes their food available at several Farmer Markets and at the Homegirl Café.

[More information](#)

2. Midnight Mission

Midnight Mission is celebrating its 100th year offering a bridge to self-sufficiency for homeless people through counseling, education, training and job placement.

Volunteer opportunities include meal service prep, clothing sorting, tutoring, plus professional services such as tax preparation and legal services. You can volunteer anywhere from once a year to weekly.

[More information](#)

3. Los Angeles Rescue Mission

The Los Angeles Mission has existed for 75 years providing help, hope and opportunity to men, women and children in need. The Mission hosts the annual Thanksgiving Feast, which attracts several celebrity volunteers.

Volunteer opportunities include decorating, graphic design, cooking grant writing and photography. Commitment levels range from one time to weekly.

The Los Angeles Mission also has a [boutique on eBay](#) that you can support.

[More information](#)

4. LAMP Community

Lamp achieves one of the highest success rates in the nation for ending homelessness. In addition to emergency housing, LAMP Community offers supportive housing permanent supportive housing HIV/AIDS support groups and transgender support groups.

To put the advantages of supportive housing in perspective: A night in a Los Angeles jail costs \$64, a night in a mental hospital costs \$607, and a night in a general hospital costs \$1,474. A night in supportive housing costs just \$30.

One of their popular programs The Art Project, seeks volunteers to lead workshops in drawing, painting, photography, and other media.

[More information](#)

5. Downtown Women's Center

DWC is exclusively dedicated to serving the unique needs of homeless and very low-income women in downtown Los Angeles's Skid Row community. They provide supportive housing and an onsite health clinic providing health screenings and workshops.

In addition to their supportive housing, DWC has a Day Center that offers clean private bathrooms, showers, meals, laundry facilities and fresh clothing.

Their social enterprise MADE is a unique boutique selling items created by DWC residents.

[More information](#)

6. The Giving Spirit

The Giving Spirit volunteers assemble and personally distributing survival kits to the children, women and families living on the street. The kits contain over 70 individual items. The Giving Spirit has distributed over 29,000 kits on Skid Row and the greater Los Angeles area.

This organization is unique since they have two outreach events each year, during the holiday season and summer. For those with limited time commitment this could be a great opportunity to help!

[More information](#)

7. San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission

Sadly, their original Mission burned down in May so they are specifically in need of help rebuilding. The SFV Rescue Mission serves homeless families in addition to individuals. Families make up a very large portion of the homeless population so organization like SFV Rescue Mission are especially critical to help the unique needs of the families facing homelessness.

[More information](#)

Volunteer to Help Kids

Children are the future of our city, country and world. Herbert Hoover, our 31st President said “Children are our most valuable resource.” Child poverty in L.A. is at its highest in 20 years. This puts children at risk for injuries and pre mature death. If you have an interest in making a difference in a child’s life, these organizations might be for you.



Credit: [826LA](#)

8. 826LA

826LA is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting students ages 6 to 18 with their creative and expository writing skills, and to help teachers inspire their students to write. Volunteers work one-on-one with students in after school programs at either a Mar Vista, or Echo Park Location. They also have a [Time Travel Mart store](#) where you can make purchases that benefit the foundation.

[More information](#)

9. School on Wheels

School on Wheels provides a unique opportunity to meet a homeless student at a public location once a week for one hour. School on Wheels strives to improve subject knowledge, increase self -esteem and self-confidence, as well as being a positive role model in the life of the student in need. In fact, the OWN Network did a feature on School on Wheels.

[More information](#)

10. Big Brother Big Sisters of America

Big Brothers Big Sisters staff members work with their partners in the education and juvenile justice communities to find children facing adversity and assess how their programs can have the greatest impact. Big Brothers Big Sisters targets the children who need the most help, including those living in single parent homes, growing up in poverty and coping with parental incarceration.

Getting together doesn't require a special occasion or expensive activity—just a few hours every month doing things the Little and Big already enjoy such as playing catch, reading books, going to a museum, or providing advice and inspiration. Some Bigs meet their Littles on the weekends. Others get together with their Littles in the evenings. Each Little and Big can develop a schedule that works for them.

[More information](#)

11. Reading to Kids

Reading to kids is a grassroots organization dedicated to inspiring children with a love of reading. Reading is proven to enrich the lives of children and increase their opportunities for success.

At the monthly reading club, pairs of volunteers read aloud to small groups of children, while their parents receive training on how to encourage their children to read at home. Kids, parents, teachers, and school libraries receive book donations at the end of the reading clubs. These are important donations, as 60 percent of low-income homes do not have age-appropriate reading materials for children.

[More information](#)

12. The Richstone Family Center

The Richstone Family Center is an organization dedicated to preventing and treating child abuse, strengthening families, and preventing violence in families, schools & communities. Specifically, they have a Kid's Club program where volunteers can lead projects to teach children photography, cooking, sports, and more. The center also provides academic assistance to children either through individual sessions or in small group settings.

[More information](#)

Volunteer to Work With Animals

It is often said that dog is man's best friend, yet there thousands of dogs and other animals are abused, neglected and killed in shelters. After all, Mahatma Gandhi said "you can judge the morality of a nation by the way the society treats its animals." If you have a love for animals, and want to make this city a better place for our furry and not so furry friends, here are some ideas for you.



Credit: NKLA on [Facebook](#)

13. NKLA

NKLA is an initiative led by [Best Friends Animal Society](#), bringing together passionate individuals, city shelters and an entire coalition of animal welfare organizations to end the killing of healthy and treatable pets in city shelters in Los Angeles, by the year 2017.

They provide spay/neuter services so fewer animals go into shelters, and increase adoptions so that more animals are placed into new homes. NKLA has a beautiful Pet Adoption Center located in the heart of West Los Angeles.

One of their popular volunteer events is the [NKLA Adoption Weekend](#) which brings together many of the NKLA partners. The last event helped 500 animals find forever homes!

[More information](#)

14. Rescue from the Hart

Annie Hart and her husband – James Hart, started their own rescue after years of supporting animal advocacy for many years.

They provide medical and emotional care through vets, trainers and foster homes. They also share rescue stories, called Rescue Tails, to further demonstrate the need for animal advocacy. Rescue from the Hart hopes to inspire others to change the lives of animals in need.

[More information](#)

15. Hope for Paws

Hope for Paws was started by Audrey and Eldad Hagar. They have been featured in the [Huffington Post](#) numerous times. Their [YouTube videos](#) get millions of hits from around the world, and they are based right here in Los Angeles.

Many people abandon their pets and dump them in the streets. The animals are then put at risk of starvation, abuse and death. “These valuable creatures help us whether it is assisting the blind or finding people under the rubble from an earthquake. They help us in times of war and during human catastrophes. We want to help both humans and animals alike live harmonious and fulfilling lives together” – Hope For Paws

[More information](#)

16. The Mutt Scouts

The Mutt Scouts in addition to rescuing animals focuses on helping animal with special needs. Basically, they rescue disabled animals that others are not able to rescue. In fact, The Mutt Scouts recently rescued a paralyzed dog in Mexico and managed to get it across the border!!

The Queen Latifah Show [recently featured](#) this amazing organization. The animal rescue world is a small one, Hope for Paws also appeared on the show and works together with The Mutt Scouts to help Los Angeles animals in need.

[More information](#)

Other Volunteer Opportunities

Still on the fence?

There are organizations available to help find the perfect volunteer opportunity for you. [LA Works](#) and [Volunteer Match](#) can help you narrow down your search by location, time commitment and interest.

You can also set up alerts to let you know which organizations in your area are in need of help.

And of course since we might have missed some great organizations on the above list, please let us know in the comments below where you think are great places to volunteer in Los Angeles.

Happy volunteering!