



Making a Difference this Holiday Season

by Stephanie Boosahda

What if half of all Cape Codders decided to take part in some sort of community action, giving to others and sharing goodwill? The potential impact would literally be awesome.

The Cape is loaded with endless, vital volunteer ventures. Just think of the memories you could make or the inner hearths you could warm. Never done it before? Well, there's no time like the present.

First, think about what you like to do and how you like to do it. Are you into theatre, sports, writing, building, quilt-making, cleaning, or planting? Do you enjoy working alone, with a group, or with just one other friend? Whatever it is, you can find a community activity that's connected to one of your passions and that fits your style.

Theatre aficionados are always needed to volunteer as ushers, program staffers and the like at the many year-round and seasonal venues here on Cape Cod, from the Harwich Junior Theatre <http://www.hjtcapecod.org> to the Cape Cod Center for the Arts <http://www.capecodcenterforthearts.org/Volunteers.htm>.

There are also special events like the recent collaborative cabaret fundraiser, In the Spotlight, held at W.H.A.T. <http://what.org.in> Wellfleet which benefited WE CAN <http://www.wecancenter.org/>, Lower Cape Outreach Council <http://www.lcoutreach.org>, and the Community Development Partnership <http://www.capecdp.org>. It was a huge success in part because of the dozens of contributing volunteers.

Do you prefer athletic endeavors? Special Olympic <http://www.specialolympicsma.org/south/localprogramsnew.htm> coaches and partner athletes just need to be dependable, possess a sense of enthusiasm, and a desire to share that enthusiasm with their Special Athlete. No Special Olympics volunteer needs to be an outstanding soccer player or floor hockey all-star.

Commitment is the key. Local recreation departments also need coaches. Depending on the age of the athletes, a love of young people is often more important than knowledge of the sport.

If you'd rather set your sights outdoors, there are numerous environmental groups that need help planting, clearing, and preserving the amazing resources of this magical place we call home. The Cape has several Audubon http://www.massaudubon.org/Nature_Connection/Sanctuaries/Wellfleet/index.php locations, the Green Briar Nature Center <http://www.thorntonburgess.org/GreenBriarNatureCenter.htm>, and many town environmental projects that survive solely on the merits of their volunteers. For more outdoor ideas, check out [this article](#).

Additionally, the Cape Cod Commission <http://www.capecodcommission.org> sponsors bi-annual Walking Weekends and an annual Cape Walk – the guides are volunteers who know specific Cape areas, but enthusiastic help is needed to realize all the exciting endeavors and keep the Cape vibrant.

Love to cook? How about making a meal for CHAMP House <http://www.champhouse.org/> or the NOAH Shelter on Winter Street in Hyannis? Call first and see what they need. Or maybe think about dropping off a dish of something special to the local fire, police, or school department employees.

Maybe beauty is more your thing. Think of the delight in the residents' faces if you were to give a holiday make-over session at a local nursing home or to a bunch of teen girl scouts and then arrange for them to help at a nursing home or senior center.

How about getting a group of female friends together and all letting your hair grow until it's long enough to donate to Locks of Love <http://www.locksoflove.org/>? Perhaps a whole scout troop, book group, or cheerleading squad could grow their hair and then go for a clipping, or make it a school-wide or church-wide venture.



Sydney prepares to donate her hair to
Locks of Love

Sydney Joyce, an eleven year old who summers in West Yarmouth, grew her hair long specifically to donate to Locks of Love; this is the second time she's donated her hair.

Don't have a passion or looking for a new one?

Many people volunteer to do things they're not good at. They learn new skills while helping others.

For example, many local sewing groups make quilts for different needy populations like Haiti, the terminally ill, homeless children, and elderly shut-ins. A lot of these groups have members who initially brought only their enthusiasm, with no prior quilting knowledge.

Likewise, not everyone who helps at Habitat for Humanity starts their volunteerism knowing how to build a house or even use a drill, but they soon learn.

Start a new family tradition this holiday season. Why not spend the morning preparing Thanksgiving dinner at a local food pantry <http://www.allcapecod.com/foodpantries.cfm> before going to Grandma's? The whole family gets to be together, help make a difference in other people lives, and be around others who care and appreciate their help. What a great new subject for the Thanksgiving dinner table, and an invigorating way to put your own Thanksgiving into perspective.

Or spend a family day together at home cleaning out closets, bookshelves, and toy boxes and then donating no longer used items to a local thrift store or place like the Lower Cape Outreach Council's Katy's Corner <http://www.lcoutreach.org/clothing.htm>, Cape Cod Hospital's Thrift Store, [Missy's Closet](#), or the local Salvation Army – these possibilities are endless.

Similarly, planning a family vacation need not be without the holiday spirit/community action combination. How about a making a difference in New Orleans on a rehabilitation trip with a local church group? (see the [Rebuilding NOLA articles](#) by Jane Schaller).

Feeling more like spending February in a warmer climate? Why not arrange for a trip to help out in Haiti? There are plenty of projects that need a whole family of volunteers, related or otherwise.

If you're looking for more 1:1, there is a great need for people to teach others to read; be a Big Brother or a Big Sister, adopt-a-grandparent, or help with office work at a variety of community service organizations. With the current state of the economy, schools and hospitals also need volunteers. Scouting, 4-H, and other youth organizations also are in dire need of people who can commit their time to helping.

Are you feeling the WOW factor here? It's simple math. Ten people each helping ten people makes 110 people whose lives are richer!

Each of us can make a difference and do something special to make Cape Cod a better place. As anyone who's taken part will tell you, getting involved in a community activity gives both parties an almost indescribably wonderful feeling that sticks deep down inside, a personal satisfaction that lasts a very long time.

Make this the holiday season that you
(and your family) make a difference.

We'd love to receive pictures of you,
you family, your group, your friends, or
you AND yours taking part in your
community action. Send your jpegs to

Nicola@capewomenonline.com with a detailed caption, and we'll post them on our Letters Page bulletin board.

Happy Helping Holidays from all of us here at CWO!

Links To Help You Get Involved:

FOR THEATER LOVERS



Cape Cod Center for the Arts, Inc.
<http://www.capecodcenterforthearts.org/Volunteers.htm>



FOR ATHLETES WITH BIG HEARTS



FOR THE ENVIRONMENTALIST



COMMUNITY OUTREACH



READ AN ARTICLE ABOUT [MISSIE'S CLOSET](#)



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