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June 21st was the Summer Solstice ... the longest day of the year and for me many things come to mind as the official first day of summer arrives. School is out, vacation plans begin to be reality and for some of us the prospect of an easier, less complicated summer schedule looks better and better. How will you spend your summer?

One of the opportunities for families and individuals alike is to volunteer at an organization in your community that might benefit from a few extra donated hours from willing people. This can be in a corporation or local company, which can be an excellent training ground for young people looking to make career decisions (often called internships) or those who simply have some time on their hands and can volunteer. Likewise, many non-profit organizations could not continue to provide the services they offer without the help of committed volunteers. Volunteers provide many intangibles, generally for short periods of time on a wide range of projects. The time that you give directly affects the bottom-line.

According to *Independent Sector* a national research organization that does research on many topics within the non-profit sector, the estimated dollar value of volunteer time was \$18.04 per hour in 2005. Twenty years earlier, in 1985 the estimated hourly value of volunteer time was \$9.60. It is very difficult to put a dollar value on volunteer time, which for the purposes of this research was limited to the average wage of non-management, non-agricultural workers over the age of 21 years. In the year 2000, the last year for which this figure is available, the total assigned dollar value of volunteer time was \$239.2 billion. This is a clearly significant statistic in that the organizations that utilized volunteers saved themselves, collectively, \$239.2 billion in a single year.

Not only does volunteering at a non-profit help the organization, it provides an easy means for the volunteer to assess the job the organization is doing in the community. Is this organization providing quality services and will the community and its constituents be better as a result?

So, if you are not sure of just what to do with some of that "extra time" this summer, look at volunteering at any of the local non-profits, work with a church or synagogue, build a Habitat for Humanity House, take a senior to lunch or just pay them a visit. Not only will you help others but you will find great satisfaction in giving of yourself.