Volunteerism is a great investment in community

By CYNTHIA SCHUSTER EAKIN

Invest in your community and yourself by volunteering. Volunteers enrich individuals and add value to the community by making it more caring and livable.

“Volunteering helps you to stay connected, meet new people and expand your social network,” Joy Banish, Executive Director of Greater Cleveland Volunteers noted. “It also helps you to update your current skill base and to learn new skills. Volunteering can also be a pathway to find employment. For those individuals who are retired, it creates a sense of purpose and gives back.”

“Studies show that volunteering can improve your health, both physically and mentally, because it helps you to stay active and engaged,” Banish added.

According to a report by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), about a third of Clevelanders volunteer. The CNCS Volunteering in America Report ranks Ohio at 23rd nationwide, with 33 percent of the population in Ohio volunteering. Cleveland is ranked at 50 percent. That puts Cleveland at 28th for volunteering among the largest cities in the U.S.

“Generation X is volunteering the most at 36 percent,” Banish said. “Baby Boomers are at 31 percent. We thought that we would see a huge surge in volunteering among Boomers retired. We have seen a huge influx because many members of the Boomer generation are still working. Millennials are at 20 percent. Younger volunteers want to make an immediate impact by working directly with people.”

“Volunteers are critical to non-profits,” Banish explained. “Research on the value of volunteers in 2016 placed a hour of volunteering as being worth $25.43 nationwide. The value in Ohio is $34.10 an hour, if a volunteer were to be paid. Volunteers make a huge contribution in time. In 2016, volunteers gave 215 billion hours of service. Opportunities for volunteering are endless. Volunteers are needed to tutor children in many subjects and to assist adults studying for the GED (General Education Development) test. Volunteers are needed to mentor young people. If you play music or sing, you can teach children how to play musical instruments. Volunteers are needed to help the homeless find a place to live, secure a skill that helps them to find work and to assist them in setting up a routine when they are ready to make such employment,” she said.

“Volunteers are always needed at museums and the areas in as an area guide. Health organizations like the Red Cross need volunteers to help set up Blood mobiles and to assist with disaster relief. Hospitals, nursing homes and hospital facilities need volunteers to assist and comfort patients.”

Even individuals with a busy schedule can find time to volunteer, according to Banish. “One-time events that need extra help are a great volunteer opportunity for people who can’t make an ongoing commitment,” she said.

Visit www.greaterclevelandvolunteers.org for information about volunteer opportunities in the Greater Cleveland community.

Helping seniors downsize in order to live their best life

By LAURE GROSS

From Sheryl Crow’s “A Change Would Do You Good” to the Beatles’ “Help,” some famous songs are about change. For good reason. Change is part of everyone’s life and sometimes it helps to sing about it.

Seniors who have downsized may feel overwhelmed with the change they face. As the founder and owner of VNTY Home, Megan Farkhanian helps clients go from overwhelm to overjoyed. Describing her company as the conscience of home transition, Megan said, “Clients are customized to package just what the family needs to produce the best emotional and functional result. We understand the end goal in most cases is to see the value of the contents of their home and the home itself. Even though you think you know how to do it, you may not have all the answers. Professional help will help you get your goal faster, with less stress and likely a far better economical solution.”

A successful conclusion depends on a good start. “Have a plan,” said Megan. “It’s overwhelming to contemplate the goal line without a road map.”

Stephanie Antunez, president and owner of California Closets agreed and added, “We see many couples in our showroom looking for solutions after they have downsized. We spend a lot of time listening to our clients needs to make sure we meet that expectation of an organized space, with creative ideas for storage. The help of an expert can really make all the difference in moving to a smaller home.”

Moving consultant Susan Kent, known as Judson’s concierge of home transition, Megan added, “It also helps you to update your current skill base and to learn new skills. Volunteering can also be a pathway to find employment. For those individuals who are retired, it creates a sense of purpose and gives back.”

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