

U.S. Surgeon General Warns of Widespread Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation

Combating Loneliness with Help from Volunteers

Easy, Practical Volunteer Opportunities Lead to Mutually Beneficial Relationships

“Loneliness and isolation represent profound threats to our health and well-being,” says U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, sounding the alarm in a new 2023 report. But all is not hopeless, as Dr. Murthy makes the point that “we are called to build a movement to mend the social fabric of our nation.”

Jubilee is taking action to address loneliness among adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through our social programs and volunteer connections. The loneliness epidemic has grown to impact all of American society. Volunteering with Jubilee is an opportunity to make mutually beneficial connections that combat loneliness.

“Volunteers can be a lifeline for people who feel isolated,” said Jubilee’s Executive Director Steve Keener. **“Social networks should extend beyond family and support staff. We see firsthand how volunteers benefit too as they forge meaningful relationships. Simple interactions like going out for pizza or playing board games together make a difference.”**

Melissa Siegel began volunteering with Jubilee after a friend asked her to help plan an event. “I never expected the impact Jubilee would have on me,” said Melissa. “I love these people, and they are the reason I volunteer.”

Now a master gardener, Melissa recently brought potted flower bulbs to the home of Debbie Lim, Liz Grimberg, Diana Krolkowski, and Sarah McGhee.

“They were so interested, and watched the plant grow and bloom. They want to do more, and so do I,” Melissa said. “At our next get-together we’re going to create flower arrangements together.”



Eli Lewis admires the garden beds at his apartment with Jubilee volunteer Melissa Siegel.

Volunteer Hannah Becker worked with Elaine Carney on her memoir. “I like listening to her life stories, and I write them down for her,” shared Hannah. “I see that I am not alone in the things that I value and experience when we talk. It’s a privilege to learn. There are so many people who have similar experiences and barriers, and we all help each other.”

“You are welcome and invited to volunteer,” said Steve. “Please bring the gift of your friendship to Jubilee and see how it will benefit you too.”

Finding Friendship Through Volunteering

As shared by Ben Apt

I was looking to do something meaningful when I moved to D.C. after law school. Jubilee told me they might have a good opportunity for me to connect with someone who shared my love of the outdoors. That's how I met Steve. I liked that Jubilee worked to make a match they thought would last. And they were right.

Steve and I have been in each other's lives for more than a decade now. Our friendship grew naturally as we went on bike rides, to the county fair, and bowling. The D.C. auto show and horse show are annual highlights for us.

At this point, our families know each other, and Steve's parents and siblings are so welcoming to me and my wife. When I first met Steve's parents, they said to me, 'you seem like a person who is going to stick.' And I guess I've stuck.



Steve Brent and Ben Apt celebrate a decade of friendship after connecting through Jubilee's volunteer program.

The most moving part of our relationship for me is the long phone calls we have. We talk about everything. Worries, achievements, and everything in between.

It's my privilege to be his friend.

You Can Be a Jubilee Volunteer

You're invited to volunteer with Jubilee! Opportunities abound for everyone from high school students to senior citizens.

- ♥ People we support want help with reading skills and studying for a high school equivalency (GED) exam. They want to learn how to swim and go fishing.
- ♥ You can participate in a Jubilee activity like our monthly game night or arts class.
- ♥ Scout troops and service organizations might assist with practical needs like lawn care at the homes of people we support.
- ♥ Bring your volunteer idea to Jubilee!



All hands on deck! Volunteer manager Britni Rose works the grill at a Jubilee cookout.

Sign up to volunteer on our website at www.jubileemd.org/volunteer.

Want more information? Contact Britni Rose at volunteer@jubileemd.org.

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