

*Alex Area Stewards have defined 13 key destiny drivers that will work to strengthen community vitality for the region. Over the coming weeks you will read about each destiny driver and its importance to the region. If you find a destiny driver that ignites your passion for the future, call the stewardship committee at 763-4545 and become a part of shaping the destiny of our region.*

**TITLE: Volunteerism Shaping- Our Future**

Destiny Driver – Increase volunteerism region-wide by 20%

**I always wondered why** somebody didn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody.

--Lily Tomlin

One sure fire to create/insure/guarantee a vibrant region is when local people volunteer with a sense of "community". Volunteering is fun, healthy, inspiring and offers a high rate of return for your future and the future of generations to come. It's a great way to connect with the people in your community...and there is no better feeling in the world.

Volunteerism also plays a critical role in the economy of our region; from hospitals, nursing homes, Chamber of Commerce, fire departments, museums, churches, local theater and arts groups, civic organizations, to our local parks and trails. They all move a 'great community' to a higher level, creating an "outstanding community".

Then, there is the dollar value of local volunteers which adds up to millions in our region. The value of volunteer work has been set at \$19.51 per hour, a widely accepted figure used by non-profits. One local nursing home alone reports 7500 hours last year, District 206 recorded 10,125 volunteer hours, 770 hours for city boards and commissions and 7,358 hours recorded at the Alexandria Fire Department. Add on all the other volunteering that is done in our communities and you can get a picture of the monetary value of volunteering to the bottom lines.

The local United Way encourages people to get involved with their new slogan:

GIVE.ADVOCATE.VOLUNTEER. The United Way has a large number of regional volunteer opportunities listed on their website at [www.uwdp.org](http://www.uwdp.org) and is currently setting up a new website where volunteer opportunities can be posted by local groups and where interested individuals can easily search for an opportunity that is right for them. In addition, the Echo Press newspaper publishes volunteer opportunities monthly.

A recent survey revealed the importance of a quality community for residents. With 88% responding that this region was a great place to raise a family, 69% responded that a sense of community was important and 78% felt the region supported its elderly. These community assets, without a doubt, are all enhanced through volunteerism.

Based on the survey results factors, it became apparent that we must increase volunteerism to meet the challenges of change in our region. To measure volunteerism, a baseline of the number of individuals volunteering and the hours they log will be utilized.

Too often we think of stewardship in terms of donating money, however, stewardship is more than that. Stewardship is a giving of one's self. There's no better opportunity than to give of your time by volunteering. To learn about the numerous volunteer opportunities, log on to the United Way's website at [www.uwdp.org](http://www.uwdp.org). You will find volunteer opportunities from a variety of agencies and tasks ranging from one-day tasks or events to long term volunteer commitments.

As community members we all want to ensure our communities' health and vibrancy. What can you do to help? What are you passionate about? What are your talents? Answer these questions and you'll find a volunteer opportunity to fit.

One person CAN make a difference. If you are currently volunteering...thanks a million. If you are not...we invite you to take the first step to get involved today. Volunteering is not a choice, it's a responsibility.

**Volunteers are seldom paid;** not because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS!

--author unknown