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Volunteers only need to click to sign up

A new Web site for volunteers is "turning good intentions into action" by matching surfers with groups that need their help.

More than 1,000 people have signed up for activities they saw listed on **VolunteerMatch** (www.volunteermatch.org), which lets nonprofit groups, schools, churches and other organizations post information free of charge.

The site is run by Impact Online, a group in Palo Alto, Calif., that explores how the Net can help the nonprofit sector. About 2,000 groups are on the site so far, says

president Jay Backstrand, 30, who raised \$300,000 in donations from Silicon Valley companies for his nonprofit start-up.

Some groups spend \$25 to \$50 to recruit one volunteer, but "we bring them lots and lots of volunteers at virtually no cost," he says.

Groups nationwide may post listings, but so far the focus has been on six high-tech cities: San Francisco; San Jose, Calif.; Seattle; Boston; Washington; and Charlotte, N.C. Each has more than 100 listings. Almost there: New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

Surfers type in ZIP code, distance they can travel and whether they're looking for a one-time or continuing activity. The site returns a list of options, from tutoring kids or serving meals to planting trees in parks.

Liz King of San Francisco saw a listing for a reading program at a local library, called and volunteered the same night. Heidi Michelson of Santa Clara, Calif., also has volunteered. "I just clicked on it and signed up," she says.

By Leslie Miller

San Jose Mercury News

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COMPUTING PERSONAL TECH⁺



DAVID
PLOTZ
MODEM DRIVER

A cyberspace
lifespan: 77
days, then 404

DEPT. OF GOOD WORKS: If you've got the time, chances are **Impact Online** has the right volunteer opportunity for you. The Palo Alto-based non-profit organization functions as a Web clearinghouse of sorts, matching people with both one-shot and ongoing volunteer tasks. The agency's new **VolunteerMatch** service, at <http://www.volunteermatch.org>, allows potential volunteers to search a vast national database of openings and filter the results by their own requirements. Punch in your ZIP code, then specify the distance you can travel, the type of public service you'd like to explore and the time you can spare. The service returns a custom list of contacts. In addition to the national database, there are also listings by city. (There are more than three dozen agencies listed for San Jose alone.)



IMPACTONLINE

www.impactonline.org

IMPACTONLINE MISSION

The mission of ImpactOnline is to use the power of the internet to mobilize community resources on behalf of community needs. Our goal is to use information technology to help people and organizations find each other on-line, and work together off-line to address areas of local concern.

THE VOLUNTEERMATCH SERVICE

ImpactOnline's premier service, VolunteerMatch (<http://www.volunteermatch.org>), makes direct linkages between people and organizations on behalf of specific local needs. Visitors to the VolunteerMatch website can input their zip code, their interests, and their time availability, and instantly retrieve a personalized list of local, up-to-date volunteer opportunities. The VolunteerMatch service saves money for non-profits by reducing volunteer recruitment costs, while increasing volunteerism by making it easier to get involved.

ENDORSEMENTS

Thousands of non-profit organizations around the country use the free on-line VolunteerMatch service to promote their mission and to recruit volunteers. VolunteerMatch has attained endorsements from City Cares organizations, Habitat for Humanity, the Points of Light, Project America, Red Cross, and the United Way.

VOLUNTEERMATCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Launched VolunteerMatch service, November, 1997
- VolunteerMatch service established with over 100 opportunities in 15 cities across the country. More than 6500 opportunities are available nationwide.
- In 1998, more than 12,000 individuals were successfully matched with volunteer opportunities in their own communities
- ImpactOnline was inducted into the Smithsonian Institution's Permanent Collection on Information Technology