



**Jonathan Tisch, Contributor**

Chairman, Loews Hotels and Co-Chairman Loews Corp.

# Get Active: Become an Entrepreneurial Volunteer

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Let's say you live in a major American city, and you notice that there's no safe way to cross a certain major highway on your bike. Or you notice that someone has left dangerous construction materials where children might find them. Or you worry that a broken fence in your neighborhood might injure a pet. Problems like these are a matter of both safety and convenience, and you know that fixing them will benefit your entire community. Who do you tell? How do you get involved?

If you're Ben Berkowitz, a web developer based in New Haven, Connecticut, you conceive and build a new online service that lets people gather their voices to drive change in their communities. [SeeClickFix.com](http://SeeClickFix.com), the site Ben launched with the help of his friends Jeff Blasius, Kam Lasater, and Miles Lasater, allows people in cities around the world to solve nagging problems. When residents of a participating city post problems to SeeClickFix.com via their computers or cellphones, others in the community provide solutions, sometimes within minutes.

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My new book, “Citizen You,” is out today, and it’s a guide to the inventive new forms of volunteering — like Ben’s — that have emerged in the last few years. In the book and its companion website, [CitizenYou.org](#), I highlight the imaginative ways that committed professionals are using their expertise to find new ways to solve old problems. I call this “active citizenship” and it can change the world.

Ben Berkowitz is an active citizen. In the time since Ben and his friends founded the service, residents in more than a thousand cities around the world have taken part — and more cities are added to the list every week.

As we explain in a [post on CitizenYou.org](#),

*SeeClickFix allows people to report non-emergency problems to local authorities and others who want to improve the public space. Whether it is the lack of a safe way for bicycles to cross I-85 in Atlanta or a broken fence in Joondalup, Australia, the site allows citizens to report problems immediately and publicly. And whereas 311 is a one-way reporting tool to inform government workers about problems, SeeClickFix actively encourages citizens to take care of some problems themselves. For instance, a problem like “Broken glass strewn across the ... sidewalk at First Avenue Bridge in Moorhead, Minnesota,” is something that local residents are encouraged to clean up themselves.*

Our country’s volunteer organizations have a positive impact on thousands of lives every day. We should all be grateful for the incredible work of these organizations and their dedicated volunteers. But an increasing number of Americans, by combining their professional expertise with their passion for helping people, are inventing fresh ways to make a difference in people’s lives. Everything helps, and everyone should contribute the best way they can.

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