

Finding Work When You're Between Jobs

by Jan Cannon

One of the challenges of being unemployed is what to do with your time when you're not actively looking for a new job or interviewing for one. It can be the source of frustration and can lead to depression if the job search is prolonged and seems to be having little success.

To counter those feelings and actually add something to your résumé – and even give you new contacts and possibilities for job options – get out of the house or apartment and volunteer your services. There are myriad opportunities just waiting for you. Here are some suggestions:

Your local **library** can always use help, whether it's reshelving books, reading to children, delivering books to shut-ins, helping to organize a book sale or keeping the grounds neat, among others. Just pay a visit to the head librarian and offer your services and see what comes up.

If you have a child in **school** (and even if you don't), why not volunteer in a classroom? Or the school library? Or help around the office. Schools always have a need for extra hands, hearts and minds. If you haven't spent time at school since you graduated (except possibly for PTA meetings or "Back to School" nights to meet the teacher), you'll be in for an education. There's lots going on with computers, sports, field trips, etc. where you can help out. Maybe you'll learn a thing or two while you're sharing what you know.

Ever wanted to be a TV or radio personality? Community access **cable television** is waiting for you. In front of and behind the camera there are plenty of things to do: hold the microphone, create stage sets, go on the scene for interviews, create your own program, be the camera operator, answer phones – the list is huge. This may be your chance to break into the entertainment field. Remember all those great stories you used to tell at the water cooler? (Public television and radio stations are always looking for volunteers, too. They're usually called internships.)

Don't forget to check out the **police** and **fire departments**. In this period of high alert these public servants are stretched to the max. Maybe they have some tasks they can pass on to you to make their jobs easier. There may be filing or other paperwork that isn't getting done as they answer increased numbers of calls for their help. Or maybe they need help learning new computer software or distributing information around the community. Drop by to find out – and while you're there tell them what a great job they're doing.

Interested in politics? There are **political organizations** for everything from running for office to helping prevent forest fires. There's something for everyone. Whether you want to help beautify the roadways, reduce drug use among teens, make hiking trails, or increase awareness of homelessness, there's a group or activity you can join. Whether it's in your neighborhood, city, state or at the national level, make the effort to help in a cause you believe in. You'll meet great people while you're at it – and you'll make a difference in someone else's life for your efforts.

Of course there are **religious organizations, homeless shelters, rehabilitation centers** for disabled workers, **reading for the blind** – the list goes on and on.

Nothing makes you feel better than helping someone else. Take this opportunity to share your expertise with others. Often when we're working full-time there's no time to do these rewarding volunteer jobs. Why not get out there and volunteer today!