



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Activism and volunteering are an important aspect of environmentalism, and there are so many ways you can get involved. Whether you are volunteering as a class, school club, family, or as an individual, this is a guide to how you can easily get involved with environmental organizations!

Education and Community Outreach

THE PLANT CHICAGO

- **Address:** 1400 W 46th St. Chicago, IL 60609
- **Contact:** tours@plantchicago.org
- **Website:** <http://plantchicago.org/>

About:

“Not long ago, *The Plant* was an abandoned 93,500 square foot pork processing facility. Now it’s a collaborative community of food businesses looking to re-value their ‘waste.’ Our mission is to cultivate local circular economies. We envision a future where the shift in production, consumption and waste is driven at the local level, generating equity and economic opportunity for all residents.”



Volunteer Information: “We’re always looking for helping hands on a variety of projects, from assisting with education programs and tending chickens to community outreach and farmers market help. We also offer sponsored corporate volunteer days for groups of up to 20 people. Volunteers must be in order to work with Plant Chicago.”

Volunteer Registration Info:

Prior to volunteering all volunteers must attend volunteer orientation, which will be provided on a rolling basis.

Click the “Volunteering + Internships” button on this page to start a conversation with The Plant about volunteering: <https://www.plantchicago.org/get-involved>

Ages: 16+

SCARCE

- Address: 2, 799 Roosevelt Rd #108, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
- Contact: Rose, rose@scarce.org
- Website: <https://www.scarce.org/>

About:

“SCARCE is an award-winning environmental education non-profit dedicated to creating sustainable communities. We accomplish this through innovative and hands-on education programs for schools and organizations, demonstrating care for people and our natural resources through our Reuse Center, and engaging the broader public through community-wide events and programs.



For over 30 years SCARCE has been implementing change to foster a more sustainable future. Find out how we can make an impact together.”

Volunteer Information:

“Keep valuable materials out of the landfill while providing kids, teachers, and community members with educational supplies they need to succeed. Everything you do at SCARCE will help protect our air, soil, and water.

We are currently welcoming fully vaccinated individuals 14+ years of age who can volunteer 2-3 hours per week at our facility. You can sort supplies, stock our bookshelves, help with recycling, and assist teachers who visit our facility. Please complete the volunteer application at the bottom of this page to apply.”

Volunteer Registration Info:

Fill out the volunteer registration form at the bottom of the volunteer page (linked below). All volunteers must be fully vaccinated.

Volunteer link with more information: <https://www.scarce.org/volunteer/>

Ages: 14+

SIERRA CLUB CHICAGO

- Address: 70 E Lake St # 1500, Chicago, IL 60601
- Contact: SierraClub.Chicago@gmail.com
- Website: <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/chicago>



About:

“Founded by John Muir in 1892, the Sierra Club works to protect communities, conserve wild places, and explore nature. The Chicago Sierra Club is 7,500 members strong. Our territory stretches south from the Lake County line to the Indiana border, west to part of La Grange, and north through Niles and Skokie. We are active in environmental issues, electoral campaigns, and social events.”

Volunteer Information:

“The Chicago Group is managed by volunteers who comprise the Chicago Group Executive Committee (ExCom). Our teams handle the day-to-day operations of the Chicago Group's conservation, political, social and administration activities.

We're always looking for volunteers! For more information on our issue teams, contact our team leaders at the email addresses below. All team meetings are held at the Sierra Club Office at 70 E. Lake Street, Suite 1500, in Chicago.”

- **Air and Energy Team**
Help move Chicago away from fossil fuels and towards 100% clean energy. Meets on the second Monday of each month. Contact Ryan Baker at rybaker5@gmail.com.
- **Chicago Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO)**
Chicago ICO, an outreach program of Sierra Club Outdoors, connects youth who have limited access to the outdoors with nature outings that promote exploration, wellness, and leadership, both in their home cities and beyond. Contact Katty Regalado at chicagolCO@gmail.com.
- **Communications Team**
Help communicate Sierra Club positions, activities and accomplishments through a wide variety of channels. Contact: SierraClub.Chicago@gmail.com.
- **Lands Wildlife Habitat Team**
Protect Chicago's natural world, with a focus on wildlife and habitat conservation. Contact Christine Williamson at birdchris@aol.com.
- **Outings Team**
Enjoy the beauty of our natural world with like-minded Sierrans. Contact Cliff Zimmerman at distance_cycler@yahoo.com.
- **Political Action Team**
Elect environmental champions at all levels of government. Contact David Teeghman at davidteeghman@gmail.com.
- **Solidarity Team**
Partner with progressive allies working on justice issues throughout Chicagoland, provide volunteer support to their campaigns as needed. Contact: SierraClub.Chicago@gmail.com.
- **Transportation Team**
Work on issues related to biking, walking, public transit and electric vehicles. Contact Ryan Baker at rybaker5@gmail.com.

- **Water Team**

Work to keep Chicago-Area Waterways clean and enjoyable for all. Meets on the first Tuesday of every month. Contact Jeff Shelden at jeffshelden@gmail.com.

If you're not sure what you want to do, email SierraClub.Chicago@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page for the basics on our 10,000-strong member group and to find out what activities might suit your interests and skills.”

Volunteer link with more information: <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/chicago/volunteer>

Ages: Varies depending on volunteer program

Farms, Forest Preserves, and Restoration Work

McDONALD FARM (THE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION)

- **Address:** 10S404 Knoch Knolls Road, Naperville, IL 60565
- **Contact:** Cass Hatzfeld, chatzfeld@theconservationfoundation.org
- **Website:** <http://www.theconservationfoundation.org/index.php>

About:

“The support of more than 5,000 members and 500 volunteers helps us carry out our mission to improve the health of our communities by preserving and restoring open space and natural lands, protecting rivers and watersheds, and promoting stewardship of our environment in northeastern Illinois. We focus our work in DuPage, Kane, Kendall and Will Counties where we have helped preserve more than 35,000 acres of open space, and we also go where we are needed in LaSalle, DeKalb and Grundy Counties.”



Volunteer Information:

“Volunteers are an integral part of achieving the mission of The Conservation Foundation, and there are many ways to get involved. We need an army to extend our reach on the land, in the water, in the classroom and in your neighborhood. Join up today!”

Volunteer Registration Info:

1. Fill out the volunteer application [here](#).
2. Wait to hear back from their Volunteer Coordinator about availability and fit.
3. At the interview you’ll be matched based on your interests and skills with current volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer link with more information:

<https://www.theconservationfoundation.org/get-involved/volunteer/>

Ages: All Ages

THE TALKING FARM

- **Address:** 3669 Howard St, Skokie, IL 60076
- **Contact:** Matt Perutz,
mattperutz@thetalkingfarm.org
- **Website:** <https://www.thetalkingfarm.org/>



About:

“The Talking Farm began in 2006 as an educational 501(c)(3) not-for-profit with the goal of connecting communities to the benefits of a healthy local food system. Today, we achieve that goal through the production, distribution, and sale of nutritious, sustainably-grown, local food, and through hands-on education, primarily in the areas of sustainability, urban agriculture, horticulture, and biodiversity. Beginning in 2010, we directed our efforts to developing our 2.5-acre urban farm, the Howard Street Farm, in Skokie.

Today, we lead over 12 comprehensive, hands-on educational programs, provide over 3,000 learning hours at our urban farm, and distribute over 21,000 pounds of hyper-local produce to the community. By 2022, we aim to distribute over 60,000 pounds of produce to the community and expand our learning programs to match the pace of growth of our urban farm. In the future, with your help, the Howard Street Farm will include 2.5-acres of growing fields, edible woodlands, fruit and nut trees, a Greenhouse, and a Welcome Center that will double as an indoor learning space.

We are 100% community-supported. We rely on volunteer sweat and the financial support of the community to achieve our mission. Now in our 12th year, together, we are growing!”

Volunteer Information:

“Volunteering with The Talking Farm will immerse you in nature and teach you how to grow food sustainably. As a volunteer, you will have a direct contribution to the development, cultivation, and harvest of the Howard Street Farm.

Volunteering is easy! For individuals and groups of up to 4 people, we will host you during Open Volunteer Hours on Wednesdays between 1-4 pm beginning March 30th, 2022. If you're interested in volunteering, just show up, or even better, give us the heads up by emailing TTF Educator & Programming Coordinator Matt Perutz at mattperutz@thetalkingfarm.org to let him know you would like to sign up and join.

When you come to the Howard Street Farm to volunteer, we will integrate you into a variety of age- and ability-appropriate farm tasks. We will provide you with tools, gloves, and instructions. Just dress for the weather, wear closed-toe shoes, and get ready for a rewarding day of working outdoors. There is a one-time \$10 fee per person for first-time volunteers and all volunteers must sign a waiver (any volunteers under 18 must have a parent or guardian sign a waiver on their behalf).”

Volunteer Registration Info:

No orientation required. Show up on dates according to this [calendar](#) and sign up [here](#) for volunteer emails and to be contacted about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer link with more information: <https://www.thetalkingfarm.org/how-to-help/volunteer/>

Ages: All Ages

FRIENDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER

- **Address:** 411 S Wells St #800, Chicago, IL 60607
- **Contact:** Mark Hauser, mhauser@chicagoriver.org
- **Website:** <https://www.chicagoriver.org/>



About:

“Since 1979, Friends has been working to improve the health of the Chicago River system for the benefit of people, plants and animals; and by doing so, has laid the foundation for the river to be a beautiful, continuous, and easily accessible corridor of open space in the Chicago region.”

Volunteer Information:

“Friends of the Chicago River has been mobilizing volunteers for four decades. Our dedicated volunteers spend countless hours working to help us restore and protect the Chicago River. There’s always more to do, and that’s where you come in.”

Volunteer link with more information: https://www.chicagoriver.org/get_involved/volunteer/

Ages: All Ages

CHICAGO LIGHTS URBAN FARM

- **Address:** 444 W Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60654
- **Contact:** Ben Jaffe, bjaffe@chicagolights.org
- **Website:** <https://chicagolights.org/urban-farm/>

About:

“Chicago Lights provides hope and opportunity to our city’s children, youth, and adults who face the challenges of poverty. Through supportive relationships and diverse



programs, we empower people to thrive academically, secure economic stability, lead healthy lives, and build community.”

Volunteer Information:

“Get your hands dirty at our Urban Farm! Work side-by-side with our Urban Farm team to help cultivate over 6,000 pounds of produce each season while supporting job opportunities and urban agriculture. Typical volunteer tasks may include weeding, shoveling compost or woodchips, seeding/planting, painting, organizing, and general site beautification.”

Volunteer Registration Information:

New volunteers must attend an orientation. Limited spots are available on certain Wednesdays at 1:00 p.m. Sign up [here](#). All volunteers must be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Volunteer link with more information: <https://chicagolights.org/volunteer/> (scroll down to the section titled “Urban Farm”)

Ages: All Ages

FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

- **Address:** 6100 N. Central, Chicago, IL 60646
- **Contact:** 773-631-1790 or volunteer.FPD@cookcountyil.gov
- **Website:** <http://fpdcc.com/>

About:

“The Forest Preserves Cook County, with more than 69,000-acres, is the largest forest preserve district in the United States. It receives an estimated 40 million visits each year, providing an escape into a world teeming with wildlife and rich with outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities. Within its boundaries are rare habitats that offer plant and animal diversity on par with the rainforests of the world. This natural heritage offers something for everyone.

The mission of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois, is to acquire, restore, and manage lands for the purpose of protecting and preserving public open space with its natural wonders — significant prairies, forests, wetlands, rivers, streams, and other landscapes with all its associated wildlife — in a natural state for the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public, now and in the future.”



Volunteer Information:

“Forest Preserves volunteers include youth, adults, retirees, nature lovers, people who want to build job skills, people looking for a new experience, people who want to experience nature

with a welcoming group—and everything in between. With all the diversity in our volunteer opportunities, there's bound to be an activity that's right for you!"

Volunteer link with more information: <https://fpdcc.com/volunteer/>

Ages: Varies depending on volunteer program

FOREST PRESERVES OF WILL COUNTY

- **Address:** 17540 W Laraway Rd, Joliet, IL 60433
- **Contact:** Emily Kenny, 815-722-7364 or VolunteerServices@FPDWC.org
- **Website:** <https://www.reconnectwithnature.org/>

About:

"From invasive species removal to litter cleanups, there are many ways to get involved at the Forest Preserves of Will County. The Forest Preserve District is dedicated to protecting, conserving, enhancing and promoting Will County's natural heritage for the educational, recreational and environmental benefit of present and future generations."



Volunteer Information:

"There are two levels of volunteering with the District. For most individuals who are looking to fulfill community service hours, want to choose from a list of opportunities or are looking for a short-term commitment, we recommend our Public Offered Volunteer (POV) program. A yearly waiver([Opens in a new window](#)) is required for all volunteers at this level.

In contrast, individuals who routinely give of their talents and resources to assist the District for an extended period of time are part of our Prairie People Volunteer (PPV) program. Their generosity allows us to provide services and programs that would not be possible without their assistance. An application([Opens in a new window](#)) will need to be completed prior to an interview to help us match you to the best assignment. PPV duties have included:

- Restoring natural areas.
- Teaching children and adults about nature and the environment.
- Monitoring trails and preserves.
- Answering visitors' questions.
- Assisting at our visitor centers, programs and special events.
- And much, much more."

Volunteer Registration Info:

To find upcoming events, locations, and trainings in Will County, visit the event [calendar](#). Apply to become a volunteer [here](#) and fill out this [waiver](#).

Volunteer link with more information:

<https://www.reconnectwithnature.org/get-involved/volunteer>

Ages: Varies depending on volunteer program

Food Pantries

OAK PARK RIVER FOREST FOOD PANTRY

- **Address:** 848 Lake St, Oak Park, IL 60301
- **Contact:** Monnette Bariel, monnette@gobeyondhunger.org
- **Website:** <https://www.gobeyondhunger.org/programs/oprf-food-pantry>

About:

“Beyond Hunger's Food Pantry provides access to healthy, nutritious food in a grocery store-like environment.”

Volunteer Information:

“Volunteers are critical to every aspect of our operation, providing over 2,000 hours of collective time every month. Our volunteers have been rated #1 for the last 40 years (by us) for their determination, compassion, availability, and overall skill. Thank you for your interest in joining our mission to end local hunger!



A variety of volunteer shifts are available, during weekday, evening, and weekend hours. We offer shifts that run the gamut, including data entry, repacking, serving Pantry guests, and unloading delivery trucks. We hope to provide a volunteer opportunity for everyone, at every ability level.”

Volunteer Registration Info:

1. Complete the [New Volunteer Form](#)
2. Attend a [Volunteer Orientation Session](#)
3. Submit [Volunteer Documentation](#)

“Once you complete the volunteer form, you will receive an email with information on upcoming volunteer orientation sessions. After you attend your volunteer orientation, you will be marked as ‘active’ and will be able to access your volunteer portal to sign up (you’ll learn how at orientation).” Proof of vaccination is required.

Volunteer link with more information: <https://www.gobeyondhunger.org/volunteer>

Ages: All ages

NORTHERN ILLINOIS FOOD BANK

- **Address:** 273 Dearborn Court, Geneva, IL 60134
- **Contact:** volunteer@northernilfoodbank.org
- **Website:** <https://solvehungertoday.org/>

About:

“Our vision at Northern Illinois Food Bank is for everyone in Northern Illinois to have the food they need to thrive. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and proud member of Feeding America, we serve our neighbors in 13 counties with dignity, equity and convenience, providing 250,000 meals a day. We bring together manufacturers, local and corporate grocers, area farmers, corporations, foundations, and individuals who donate food and funding, and each week nearly 1,000 volunteers help us evaluate, repack, and distribute food. We also proudly partner with more than 900 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and youth and senior feeding programs to provide nutritious food and resources. Our distribution centers are located in Geneva, Park City, Rockford and Joliet.”



Volunteer Information:

“There are many ways to get involved at the Northern Illinois Food Bank. Click on a title below to learn more about your desired position:

- [Food Sorting and Packing](#)
- [Grocery Distribution](#)
- [Skills-Based Volunteering](#)
- [Signature Events & Committees”](#)

Volunteer link with more information: <https://solvehungertoday.org/volunteer-opportunities/>

Ages: 8+

GREATER CHICAGO FOOD DEPOSITORY

- **Address:** 4100 W Ann Lurie Pl, Chicago, IL 60632
- **Contact:** 773-247-3663, ext. 3
- **Website:** <https://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/>

About:

“The Greater Chicago Food Depository is Chicago’s food bank. We believe a healthy community starts with food. The Food Depository is part of a united community effort working to bring food, dignity and hope to our

WE HAVE 1 GOAL.
1 MISSION.
TO FIGHT HUNGER
1 DOLLAR,
1 MEAL,
1 PERSON AT A TIME.
UNTIL THE DAY THAT
NO 1 GOES HUNGRY.

NO 1 SHOULD
GO HUNGRY



Cook County neighbors. We act as the hub for a network of more than 700 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and other programs. These programs provide food where it's most needed. We also address the root causes of hunger. Public benefits outreach and job training programs offer support for our neighbors to overcome poverty.”

Volunteer Information:

“Volunteers are essential to our work. We have never faced a need so great – and we need your help.

We urgently need volunteers to pack food for our neighbors during the ongoing hunger crisis. Whether you'd like to volunteer by yourself, with a group or with your family, we have opportunities for you to safely make a difference. Sign up now to help provide food and hope for families across Cook County.”

Opportunities include:

- Repackaging bulk food into family-sized portions
- Distributing fresh produce at a FRESH Truck
- Delivering produce and summer meals for children
- Collecting food at events
- Seasonal vegetable harvests
- Monthly Kids Day repacks

Volunteer Registration Info:

Sign up for events [here](#).

Volunteer link with more information: <https://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/volunteer/>

Ages: Varies depending on volunteer program