

Volunteers Vital to County COVID Response

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Clatsop County has extra reason to be thankful for the many generous community members who have given their time and expertise as volunteers.

This year, as the county observes National Volunteer Week April 17-23, the extraordinary contributions of those who stepped up to help with the local COVID-19 response are of special note.

Over the years, volunteers have served in a variety of roles for the county – in search and rescue teams, in youth mentor programs, at the county animal shelter, and on numerous boards and committees. In any given year volunteers provide thousands of hours of service valued at hundreds of thousands of dollars – service the county would otherwise be hard-pressed to provide.

“The COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to individuals, families, businesses and the entire community. Yet local residents again stepped up to lend their time and talents to the county’s response to the crisis,” said Jane Dunkin, Clatsop County volunteer coordinator. “We are fortunate to live in a community where people are dedicated to giving back.”

According to data from the county’s Human Resources office, in the 2021 calendar year volunteers donated more than 17,000 hours to the county’s COVID-19 response. This equates to almost \$500,000 of labor.

Volunteers were particularly vital to the operation of the mass vaccination clinics the county launched in Spring 2021. Many current and retired healthcare professionals volunteered to administer vaccines, while other people helped with registration, clean-up and traffic control at the events, which served as many as 900 or more people a day.

Another critical element of the local pandemic response has been the Public Information Call Center (PICC), whose volunteer call-takers have answered individuals’ questions about masking, vaccines, treatments and related subjects, and signed people up for vaccinations. The PICC continues to operate today to provide up-to-date information on vaccine boosters and other developments.

“Helping with the COVID response seemed to be the right thing to do when the need was so great,” PICC volunteer Chris Woolsey said last year. “It’s good to learn new things, and being involved with the county’s effort has been a very positive experience.”

“We’re truly fortunate to have so many generous community members willing to step in and help,” said Jill Quackenbush, deputy public health director. “Our volunteers care deeply and have been so gracious with their ongoing support. We couldn’t have sustained the level of services that we have without them.”

Information on volunteer opportunities with Clatsop County are available on the county website