

## Volunteer Opportunities near UMass Amherst

While ALL volunteer work is valued by graduate programs in the health fields, we especially recommend service that will allow you the opportunity to:

- Engage with the people non-profit or government organization serves directly (as opposed to primarily doing fundraising or administrative tasks)
- Work with those who are from backgrounds different from your own, whether that be age, race, culture, socioeconomic status, etc.
- Develop a sustained interest and understanding of a particular non-profit or issue area (as opposed to doing a multitude of very short-term service experiences where you are less likely to learn and grow over time)

There is especially value in finding a non-profit or government agency where you truly enjoy volunteering and establishing a **sustained** commitment to that organization. With time, you have the opportunity to develop a wealth of the Core Competencies that health professional schools seek:

- Service Orientation
- Social Skills
- Cultural Competence
- Oral Communication
- Teamwork
- Reliability and Dependability
- Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Capacity for Improvement

In short, find a place to volunteer that genuinely aligns with your passions. You will grow much more from the experience as you will be self-motivated to engage more deeply and to bring your enthusiasm with you to your service experience. Volunteer work of this nature can help you to stand out during the application process. Everyone loves to be around people who are genuine, passionate, and engaged, so be thoughtful about what you choose to do with your time.

## Ideas for Volunteering Locally

Those opportunities listed below with an asterisk should be within walking distance or less than a 20 minute PVT bus ride from campus. Some of the organizations offer internships or work-study opportunities that are paid. While that is fine, still aim to do at least 1-2 hours of volunteer service weekly. Finally, a number of these opportunities—at hospitals, nursing homes, etc.—can provide exposure to clinical experiences for medical school, but, keep in mind, there are no shortcuts to medical school. You want to develop a robust portfolio of activities and skills, not rely on one volunteer/clinical position to check all the boxes for you.

### Focus on People with Special Needs

\*[Boltwood Project](#): The Boltwood Project is a student-run civic engagement and leadership program designed to provide enrichment, recreation, and socialization for adults and children who are intellectually or physically challenged.

\*[Special Olympics Club](#): Provides year-round sports training and athletic competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Goals include developing physical fitness, expressing courage, and experiencing joy.

\*[Stavros](#): Helps people with disabilities and/or who are deaf to develop the tools and skills they need to take charge of their own lives. Volunteers can help people to access the outdoors or work as advocates, explaining how to fill out the necessary paperwork to live independently.

[Whole Children](#): This organization in Hadley helps to provide recreational, social, and enrichment programs for children and teens of all abilities, specially designed for those with special needs.

## Focus on Seniors

\*[Amherst Senior Center](#): While there is not much information online about the Center, it is a very active place for seniors that offers a breadth of low to no-cost activities. Call 413-259-3060 or visit at 70 Boltwood Walk to learn more.

[Highland Valley Elder Services](#): Volunteers can assist in a breadth of activities: providing educational trainings for disease management, delivering meals, serving as advocates for seniors, helping to manage money, and more.

## Focus on Youth

\*[A Better Chance Amherst](#): Assist with this national residential high school program that prepares academically talented and highly motivated, diverse students from educationally underserved school districts to find success at Amherst Regional High School and in their college pursuits.

\*[America Reads/America Counts](#): Tutor children in reading or math.

\*[Amherst Boys and Girls Club](#): Mentor youth and serve as a positive presence for them in a variety of capacities—everything from art to athletics to education.

\*[Amherst Hockey Association](#): This non-profit hockey league relies on volunteers for coaching teams of all levels, including teaching children how to skate. Contact the Board for opportunities to volunteer.

[Amherst Leisure Services and Supplemental Education \(LSSE\)](#): The town of Amherst runs a number of programs for people of all ages—day camps, swim lessons, academic support, sports, arts, and more. Reach out to see if they need volunteers in an area in which you are skilled.

\*[Amherst Public Schools](#): The closest school district to campus has volunteers to help with tutoring and more. Be sure to share what your skill sets are to see what opportunities might best suit your interests and their needs.

[Amherst Youth Soccer Association](#): This non-profit soccer league relies on volunteers for coaching teams of all levels.

[Berkshire Children & Families](#): This expansive organization strives to improve early education and care as well as child and family well-being. It also offers intensive foster care and adoption services and an intensive classical music program for social change.

\*[Big Brothers Big Sisters](#): Serve as a mentor to a local youth. You can do this by joining Big Brothers Big Sisters directly or going through the UMass chapter, which offers guidance and support to volunteers.

\*[Capacidad After-School Program](#): A nearby after school program that serves elementary-aged children.

[Head Start & Early Learning Programs](#): This organization works with infants through pre-school-aged children from low-income families to be sure they have access to high quality care from the earliest stages of life.

[Homework House in Holyoke](#): This organization provides free, individualized tutoring and mentoring for children at-risk.

[Reader to Reader, Springboard Program](#): Five College students are able to develop and implement their own international or domestic literacy project with guidance from this non-profit.

\*[Student Bridges](#): This organization works to increase college access and success for underrepresented students by partnering UMass with local schools.

## Focus on Physical or Mental Health

[Cancer Connection](#): Located in Northampton, this organization offers a haven where people living with cancer, their families, and their caregivers can learn how to cope with their changed lives and bodies through free programming.

[Cancer House of Hope in West Springfield](#): This non-profit offers free services and therapies that bring comfort, care, strength, resilience, and hope to patients with cancer and their loved ones.

[Team Henry – A Community Wellness Movement](#): Work with children to educate them on healthy lifestyle habits.

[Therapeutic Equestrian Center](#): Assist with therapeutic horse riding in Holyoke.

## Focus on People who are Financially Disadvantaged

\*[Amherst Community Connections](#): This non-profit works to find housing for those in need and accepts interns to work directly with their participants for case work. Interns can also learn about web design, social media, fundraising, grant writing, and more.

\*[Amherst Survival Center](#): Volunteers help those in families in need to select food, produce, and personal care items in addition to stocking pantry shelves, sorting donating clothing, picking up donations for retail shops, and more. Northampton also runs a [Survival Center](#).

\*[Craig's Doors](#): Volunteers are needed to assist at the shelter and the community breakfast. They also accept volunteers who can help them with everything from marketing to case management operations.

[Family Outreach of Amherst](#): This organization is a safety net for low-income families in Amherst, addressing mental health, domestic violence, housing and life skills. Volunteers assist in planning events, participating in client services, and more.

[Horizon's for Homeless Children](#): Playspace Activity Leaders lead activities for children residing in homeless shelters, giving them an opportunity to engage while their parents take classes and pursue permanent housing solutions.

\*[Not Bread Alone](#): This organization welcomes everyone to help prepare and enjoy fresh, nutritious, and family-style meals that are free to those in need.

[The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts](#): Volunteers assist with organizing and sorting food for distribution.

## Focus on Immigrant Populations

\*[Center for New Americans](#): Volunteers can assist in the classroom, as ESOL tutors, citizenship tutors, or drivers. They can also offer professional mentoring or childcare.

\*[Jones Library ESL & Citizenship Program](#): This award-winning program offers volunteer tutors, English and citizenship classes, and other services to adult immigrants in the Amherst area.

## Focus on Women and Girls

\*[Center for Women & Community](#): The Center provides community education, general counseling, rape crisis services, and more to the Five Colleges and Hampshire County, relying heavily on interns and volunteers to do so.

[Girls Inc. of Holyoke](#): Girls Inc. empowers, educates, and guides girls forward, helping them to navigate the challenges in their lives on the way to becoming strong, smart, self-reliant women.

[Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts](#): Volunteers can be assistant troop leaders or serve as mentors to young girls.

\*[Eureka!](#): This is a five year journey for teenage girls, preparing them to participate and excel in cutting-edge, dynamic STEM careers. The program relies on volunteers to lead intensive STEM programs at UMass during the summer.

[MotherWoman](#): This organization uses volunteer facilitators to run community-based programming for new parents and families.

## Focus on Health

[Baystate Health](#): The largest hospital in the area, Baystate has a number of facilities and locations ranging from Springfield to Greenfield, each of which has its own need for volunteers.

- Baystate Medical Center & Children's Hospital
- Baystate Mary Lane Outpatient Center
- Baystate Franklin Medical Center
- Baystate Hospice
- Baystate Noble Hospital
- Baystate Wing Hospital

[BFit Shriner's Children's Hospital](#): Volunteers *with training in exercise science* help aid patients with neuromuscular diseases to stretch and complete exercises that help them to walk faster, have better quality movements, and be more active at home. Kinesiology students should check with their faculty and advisors to learn more.

[Cooley Dickinson](#): This hospital in Northampton accepts volunteers for hospice, the cancer center, and more. Volunteers primarily focus on making patients comfortable and transporting them around the hospital.

\*[Elaine Center with the Neuroscience Club](#): Volunteer in the Alzheimer and Dementia Unit at the Elaine Center, keeping residents company and assisting with games and activities.

\*[Hospice of the Fisher Home](#): After extensive training, volunteers help to put patients and their families at ease during a time that is full of questions.

[Shriner's Hospital for Children in Springfield](#): The Springfield Shriners Hospital is a specialized orthopaedic hospital offering volunteer positions in various departments, as well as their information desk.

[The Arbors at Amherst](#): Volunteer to keep residents company and to assist with games and activities.

[Compassus](#): Volunteers are trained before being matched with patients in the area who receive hospice care. They support patients and their families by listening and providing comfort.

[New England Health Center](#): This organization in Sunderland offers rehabilitation through OTs, PTs, speech therapists, and more in helping their patients to reclaim their highest possible level of independence. Volunteers keep residents company and assist with games and activities.

## Focus on Arts or History

\*[Amherst Community Arts Center](#): This organization is devoted to furthering visual arts education where people of all ages and abilities can come together and learn about art and creating. Visit the Center at 534 Main St. in Amherst to learn more as their website is not up-to-date.

[Amherst Historical Society](#): This non-profit seeks volunteers of all ages interested in history and offers training with flexible hours.

\*[Emily Dickinson Museum](#): Volunteers can assist with community programming that promotes poetry and the works of Emily Dickinson.

\*[Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art](#): Volunteers assist in the museum, often working directly with the public in the Art Studio or the Reading Library.

\*[Starlight's Youth Theatre](#): This theatre runs programming for youth in the community to develop their creativity through drama. Reach out to see if they need any volunteers.

[Yiddish Book Center](#): Volunteer docents help to support the Field Trip Program staff, assisting in leading student groups on visits of the Center and facilitating interactive activities and tours. Docents also greet and orient visitors.

## Focus on Nature

\*[4-H Youth Development UMass Extension](#): Work with and mentor young people ages 5 to 18 to develop life skills outside of formal education settings.

[Hitchcock Center](#): Volunteers can teach the public and special groups about the sustainability of the buildings on site, greet visitors, share the live animals, and answer phones.

## Additional Resources

[Five Colleges Volunteer Website](#): Another list of local non-profits that seek volunteers.

[GuideStar](#): A database of registered non-profits throughout the country.

[Idealist](#): This website is a primary place where jobs and internships in the non-profit arena are posted.

[Massachusetts Service Alliance](#): This site offers a forum for non-profits in the state to post for volunteers.

[UMass Civic Engagement and Service-Learning](#): Provides formal opportunities for UMass students to engage in their communities.

[UMass Student Activities and Involvement](#): Since many RSOs on campus do volunteer work, this office can share how you might get involved in service by joining a campus club.

[VolunteerMatch](#): This website is a place for non-profits throughout the country to post for volunteers.