



Connecting Volunteers to Missions Across Cayuga County

How United Way's Volunteer Cayuga Platform Brings Community Together

Article written by Julisa J. Stone-Szpaicher | Wednesday, April 22, 2026

Examples of volunteerism have been documented as far back as the 12th century—but would you have ever guessed that the biggest revolution in volunteering was the internet!? The introduction of the internet created the ability to connect individuals to organizations across the state, nation, and globe (Todd, 2019).



Your United Way of Cayuga County has joined this revolution with the launch of Volunteer Cayuga, an online hub dedicated to connecting community members to missions and projects that are meaningful to them right here in your community. Explore Volunteer Cayuga by scanning the QR code to the right.



Volunteering often is viewed as a one-size fits all – but with Volunteer Cayuga you can find roles that meet your skill sets and interests. The best part of Volunteer Cayuga is that it is volunteer supported! Office volunteer, Jill Lombardo, thrives in her role because she is meticulous and enjoys data entry tasks. Jill researches nonprofits in Cayuga County who could use volunteer support and is creating a database with contact information for United Way staff or another volunteer to make outreach. When asked what she enjoys most about her volunteer role, Jill shared “I am learning about agencies within Cayuga County that I did not know about, which is beneficial to me as I live and work in Cayuga County.” Are you looking for an opportunity with the United Way? Volunteer Cayuga is a big project and more volunteers are needed to support Jill with research as well as helping make phone calls to agencies to set up accounts, assist with posting volunteer opportunities, and other site maintenance. Since Volunteer Cayuga is web-based, we can make this role hybrid or remote!

In the fall, the Salvation Army posted a Seasonal Assistant role on their Volunteer Cayuga page for their annual Thanksgiving meal. A local resident, we'll call her "Catherine", saw the post and reached out to Captains Daniel and Holly Johnson to offer her help. Catherine was instrumental in helping the Salvation Army coordinate an efficient and successful Thanksgiving meal through her organizational skills and managing phone calls. Having Catherine there allowed the Captains to focus on meal preparations and volunteer coordination.



VIDEO

Scan the QR code to watch a 90 second video clip of Captain Dan sharing how impactful Catherine's support was last year. The Salvation Army has a variety of needs year-round and you can explore and respond to opportunities that meet your skill set and availability by visiting VolunteerCayuga.org.

Book Buddies is a United Way of Cayuga County youth mentorship program where volunteers read to second graders twice a month to help strengthen reading and literacy skills as well as building social skills and self-confidence. The program launched at Genesee Elementary in Auburn during the 2024-25 academic year. Fourteen youth were supported, and the school saw a 42% increase in attendance among those students. Due to the success, Book Buddies, now in its second year, is at both Genesee Elementary and Herman Ave Elementary with plans to expand into Casey Park Elementary this fall.



We need YOUR help! Book Buddies is volunteer driven and as your United Way continues to grow and expand this literacy program, more volunteers are needed to be Book Buddies to read and mentor students as well as Book Buddy Ambassadors who help coordinate the program at a particular school.

Lynda DeOrio has been a Book Buddy since 2025 and has recently agreed to be a Book Buddy Ambassador for the 2026-27 academic year. Lynda shares *"During my time as a Book Buddy, I have seen firsthand the difference spending a little extra time reading with one student can give them confidence and help them feel supported. I am excited to help expand the program to another school so more children can have that opportunity."*



Are **YOU** interested in becoming a Book Buddy or Book Buddy Ambassador? Scan the QR code and complete our interest form! If you have questions about Book Buddies or are interested in having this program come to your school district, reach out to Programs Coordinator, Sarah Sayles at 315.253.9741.





“May I try, if I really can, to make the world a little better for having lived in it.”

Emily Howland (1827-1929) Cayuga County Philanthropist & Humanitarian

Volunteering has been a cornerstone of humanity for centuries. According to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 28% of your neighbors volunteer—75.7 million Americans aged 16 and older (Hanson Schlachter, 2024). Your United Way of Cayuga County is a volunteer driven organization with more than 500 community members donating their time, skills, and talents each year.

Launched in October 2025, Volunteer Cayuga is a new and growing resource for Cayuga County. Nonprofits and community spaces can create business accounts and post a variety of volunteer opportunities from one-time event support, minor carpentry projects, light filing, or even a painting project! You can also find on-going committee and Board service opportunities. Prefer to support in-kind and donation requests? You can find opportunities such as comfort care kits for Hospice, stage equipment for Auburn Public Theater, hygiene items for the United Way Personal Care Drive, and more on Volunteer Cayuga.

Neighbors, like you, can create a personal account and “respond” to volunteer opportunities and your information will be automatically sent to the organization—this connection is directly with you and the agency you want to volunteer at. Give back to your community by finding a mission you believe in and a volunteer opportunity that fits your skill set, interests, and time by visiting Volunteer Cayuga!



DONATE TODAY

Volunteer Cayuga, Book Buddies, Day of Caring, Nonprofit Summit, Student United Way and many others are all programs of the United Way of Cayuga County that support our neighbors year after year. To ensure the longevity of these programs and your United Way, please consider donating and scan the QR code today.