



Finding time to give back is often easier than you think, says Bush Lauren

SPOTLIGHT

Lauren Bush Lauren on how—and why—to give your time to others

WHILE TRAVELING WITH THE U.N.'S WORLD Food Programme as a college student, philanthropist Lauren Bush Lauren saw firsthand the reality of poverty in such countries as Cambodia and Chad. The experience led her to found a nonprofit focused on hunger, called Feed, in 2007. The company, which initially sold tote bags and used the proceeds to fund meals for hungry people, has since expanded. Feed also hosts 10K races across the country, charity dinners and more. Giving has long been part of the entrepreneur's life: she has worked in soup kitchens, homeless shelters and underserved hospitals from an early age. If you've never wielded a ladle or cleaned a kennel, fear not: Bush Lauren has some insights for volunteering rookies.

1. GET SPECIFIC. While many volunteers pick a charitable organization with personal significance, Bush Lauren suggests volunteering according to your strongest aptitude. If you're an artist, for example, you might want to teach art classes to children who wouldn't otherwise have access to them. "When you can marry your specific skill set and expertise, not only will you be more engaged and excited, but your time will be better spent," says Bush Lauren.

2. BECOME A REGULAR. If you're reading to children in a hospital or working with senior

citizens, the impact of your work will be compounded with every visit. "I have friends who go every week to the same soup kitchen in their synagogue to volunteer," says Bush Lauren. "That's extremely rewarding when people can regularly engage with not only a single cause but a single community center, hospital, soup kitchen, wherever it may be. That way, you truly become a part of their operations and really get to know the people they're serving and can dig in deeper in that way." It also means you'll see some of the fruits of your donated labor.

3. THINK ABOUT YOUR TIME CREATIVELY. Many people assume they don't have the margin in their lives to volunteer. But if you reframe how you think about giving back, you'll see that you can work it into your schedule. Give in easy-to-do increments—an hour or two at a time rather than a whole day. Or lead the charge at work to make giving back a company priority. Says Bush Lauren: "Most employers want their companies to be doing their civic duties and want their teams to be bonding outside of work in that way but maybe don't have the time to organize it themselves ... And that way, you're not taking off time from your family or taking off time from your work but are doing it as part of your work schedule."

Apply the same logic to the home front. Volunteer with your children so it doesn't come at the expense of family time. Interacting with the people you're helping will cultivate your kids' sense of empathy—and yours too.

—ROBIN HILMANTEL

4 APPS TO HELP YOU GIVE BACK

VOLUNTEERMATCH

aggregates volunteer opportunities with organizations across the U.S., sorted according to your location and interests (like animals or arts and culture). Listings include information about the required time commitment so you can find something that works for your schedule. (volunteermatch.org)

GIVEGAB

offers a personalized search, similar to VolunteerMatch—but



also lets you connect with fellow volunteers, set service

goals and keep track of where you've worked. (givegab.com)

VOLUNTEERSPOT

helps you organize and plan volunteer events—think school bake sales and church rummage



sales. The free version helps you create an event page,

send email invites and collect contributions all in one place. (volunteerspot.com)

CHARITY MILES

lets you give while you work out. The app



donates 25¢ to the organization of your choice

for every mile you walk or run (or 10¢ a mile if you bike). And you don't pay—donations are made by the app's corporate sponsors. (charitymiles.org)

—Jessie Van Amburg