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How to Take Action in Your Community

Most of us hope to make a positive difference in the world, particularly in the part of the world where we live, work, and play. [There are lots of ways](#) to contribute to your community, and working for a cause that is meaningful to you is a great way to approach it.

Are you concerned about the environment, quality schools, health care, politics, neighborhood safety, public transportation, the arts, diversity, quality libraries, or something else? Working for a cause, whether paid or as a volunteer is a great way to meet others and help build a better community. Today, [Prickly Pear Junction](#) explores some ways you can make a difference here in East Helena.

Get Involved in Local Events

You could start a project, such as a litter pick-up day, or join one that is already started, such as a voter registration drive. Maybe you'd like to assist in local elections by becoming a poll worker. Many libraries have "Friends of the Library" groups that carry out book drives, volunteer their services in libraries, and help publicize events. Participating in such a group might be rewarding

to both you and the community. If you enjoy being outdoors, and your area has a farmer's market or community garden, [you could volunteer there](#).

Make 'Giving Back' Your Career

Your chosen career can be a great way to give back to your community. For example, becoming a nurse is a good way to help others in your area, not just in the moment, but for years. All humans will need some type of medical care, and many hospitals and medical offices are currently experiencing a shortage of nurses, so contributing in this field would [most certainly be welcome](#) and appreciated.

You might think that getting this degree is too time-consuming or expensive, but several options are available. Many nursing schools now offer online degrees for part or all of the coursework. Pursuing the degree part-time or evenings could allow you to maintain a day job and support yourself as you study for the credentials. Pursuing an online degree can also allow you to be at home with your family more while the process is underway.

Other Ways to Help Your Community

Consider local historical and cultural sites as avenues for volunteer work. Botanical gardens, museums, theaters, and festivals are often sustained by a busy corps of volunteers. Investing your time and effort with such a place is also a good way to meet like-minded people, too.

- *Help at the Park* – If you live near a national or state park and enjoy being outdoors, Money magazine suggests [considering volunteering in the park system](#). Some national parks even let volunteers live in the park in a recreational vehicle in return for a certain number of hours worked. Many city and state parks have volunteer programs that include all sorts of possibilities. You could help with trail maintenance, removal of invasive plants, assist in educational programs and public events, or even tree planting.

- *Volunteer for Literacy* – Volunteers to help in literacy programs are often needed. You could work with adults or children, teaching, coaching, or even just reading aloud. [Helping others learn to read](#), or work toward their GED is a service, which can change someone's life for the better. Imagine how difficult negotiating the world would be if you couldn't read, and then imagine how many doors might be unlocked once you learn.

- *Coach a Team* – Believe it or not, helping to coach or organize a community sports team, whether kids or adults, is another way you can help your community. If you have a passion for sports, why not help others to discover the joy found there?

- *Start a Nonprofit* – If there's a local cause that's near and dear to you that could use some extra attention, you can always start your own nonprofit. A true grassroots organization takes lots of manpower, however, so you'll need to consider how to get

volunteers, appointing a board and even registering your nonprofit at the state and local level.

- *Run for Local Office* – You might consider running for a local office, such as being on the school board. [This is a way to participate](#) in the making of policy decisions and enrich the school system in your area. Regardless of whether you have kids in school, the educational system is critical for a strong community. Policies and regulations vary from state to state, so be sure to find the specific guidelines for your area.

- *Teach Financial Literacy* – If you've got a knack for numbers, saving and budgeting, there are plenty of people who can use your skills. Whether through your church, a local rotary group or even through a senior center, helping people learn to better manage their money opens up new opportunities. You could be the driving force behind a family [saving up to buy](#) their first home!

- *Share Your Tech Skills* – Finally, if you're good with computers or technology, CIO points out that you might be able to [volunteer to instruct people](#) in these areas, in schools, the library, or a community center. The skills that you take for granted are not ubiquitous, and many of the less technology-savvy people in your community could benefit from your help.

There are so many ways to take action in your community, both paid and volunteer. Think about the causes you are passionate about, and check with local organizations that address these concerns. No doubt they'll be glad to have your assistance, and you might make some new friends who share your passion. It's also good to consider your areas of skill and expertise. If an established path for contributing exists, then sign up! And if no current opportunity is available, you might need to create your own project or nonprofit. Whatever you choose to do, it will help your area and make you an integral and appreciated member of the community.

[Prickly Pear Junction](#) is your best source for news and information on East Helena. Call 406-431-6026.