

FAQs about Volunteering

1. What is Adventures in Caring?

Adventures in Caring Foundation is a nonprofit health and human services organization based in Santa Barbara, California. Every week, all year round, volunteers, ages 16-83, specially trained in compassionate listening skills, visit patients in hospitals and nursing homes throughout California and other states.

2. What does it take to be a Raggedy Ann or Andy volunteer?

All you need to be a Raggedy volunteer is a desire to lift another person's spirit, some ability to listen, and a commitment to volunteer for just 2 hours per week at a hospital or nursing home near you. You will be required to attend the in-depth practical training in interpersonal communication skills to learn the art of giving support to those who are seriously ill. To learn more about volunteering as a Raggedy or helping to support the work of the Adventures in Caring Foundation just visit the volunteer section on this site and fill out and submit the volunteer application form or email us at volunteering@adventuresincaring.com

3. Where is Adventures in Caring volunteer training held?

All Adventures in Caring volunteer training is held at Adventures in Caring's home in Santa Barbara, California. Training dates are listed in the section of this web site devoted to Volunteers. Each of our volunteer training programs begins with a hands-on training seminar conducted over a full weekend. Volunteers are required to volunteer for 2 hours per week for one year following their in-depth training. Volunteers spend time with critically ill patients of all ages, bringing encouragement, hope and joy.

4. Why do I have to take the training?

For nursing staff to allow you anywhere near someone who is critically or chronically ill, and may be in a life-threatening situation, they have to trust that you know what you are doing. Our screening and training process produces volunteers the nursing staff and patients can trust: volunteers who have the emotional maturity, good judgment, communication skills and training to gracefully work with all manner of emotionally intense and sensitive situations.

In addition, only when the training seminar is successfully completed are volunteers given the necessary permission they need to legally use the licensed characters of Raggedy Ann & Andy, trademarks of Simon & Schuster, Inc., under the umbrella of the Adventures in Caring Foundation.

5. Once I've taken the training can I build a program in my own community?

No. Our volunteer training seminar gives you all you need to begin volunteering as Raggedy Ann or Raggedy Andy in your community, but it does not teach you how to teach this art to others. We have found that compassion cannot be taught by lecture, and have developed a variety of educational methods to build the capacity for compassion. A separate train-the-trainer program is being created for experienced volunteers so that we will have a small team of trainers who are gifted at both the art of visiting the sick, and at building this ability in others.

6. How does the Raggedy program work?

Raggedys are not clowns. They do not entertain but they do ask good questions, draw out the best in people, and LISTEN. They encourage residents of nursing homes and patients in hospitals with unconditional love, joy and hope. They bring four gifts

that people who are ill need so much: personal attention, acknowledgement, affection and acceptance. As a result Raggedys help a patient's state-of-mind become more conducive to healing – by taking a genuine interest in the patient's life; engaging them in meaningful conversations; carefully listening to their stories; and helping them feel needed and wanted.

7. Are your Raggedy volunteers available to attend parties or parades?

No. Raggedy Ann & Andy volunteers have a singular purpose: to visit the sick. Raggedy volunteers are not entertainers, and because we don't want to send a mixed message to the community, they do not (when dressed as Raggedy Ann or Andy) attend parties, parades, picnics, opening-day sales, or any other promotional events.

8. Do I have to wear a costume to be an Adventures in Caring Volunteer?

Our Raggedy Ann and Andy volunteer program is the most well know of all of our programs but Adventures in Caring has other volunteer programs that do not require you to be a Raggedy. Adventures in Caring recently began a new program visiting with kidney dialysis patients and other opportunities are available to use the "Therapeutic Listening Care" TLC training offered by Adventures in Caring. However, the necessary skills for these programs are also learned through volunteering as Raggedy Ann or Raggedy Andy. This develops humility and a capacity to take yourself lightly – essential qualities for bringing a healing presence to the sick.

9. I am a college student. Can I receive academic credit for volunteering?

Compassion in Action is a Service-Learning course that can be taken for college credit through the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) Health Professions Association. This one-year course is designed to give undergraduate students an opportunity to gain specific experience and communication skills focused on the human side of medicine. The course combines academic classes with hands-on volunteering. Students receive academic credit for this course through UCSB. See a more complete description of Compassion in Action by visiting AiC Programs in the section of this site devoted to Volunteers.

10. How can I arrange to have volunteers visit a nursing home or hospital?

Adventures in Caring volunteers are placed in a wide variety of health care facilities as part of the Raggedy Therapy, Raggedy Companions and other Adventures in Caring visitor programs. If you are interested in starting a volunteer program at your nursing home or hospital contact volunteering@adventuresincaring.com to talk with us about your training requirements.

11. Are there other ways to help Adventures in Caring besides being a visitor?

Yes. The Adventures in Caring Foundation relies on a corps of volunteers to support their programs. Some of our volunteer jobs include sewing Raggedy costumes and making the dolls that are given during visits. There is also a need for help planning and executing special events for volunteer recognition and community support. Adventures in Caring relies on private donations for program support and welcomes volunteers who can help with fundraising and public relations activities.

12. How else can I help?

You can actively support Adventures in Caring by furthering our mission of Compassion in Action in your own life. We urge you to become familiar with the

concepts of Therapeutic Listening Care through our books and videos and pass them on to friends and family and visit the sick. Share of yourself by spending time with people on the threshold of life.