

Make It Happen with Emily Kimball  
.....Creative Aging Expert.....

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### **Civic Engagement, Yes!**

- 1. Park Ranger**
- 2. Campground Host**
- 3. Concession Worker**
- 4. Dog walker**
- 5. Katrina Volunteer**

### **Resource Guide**

### **Civic Engagement, Yes!**

During my recent trip to Florida and Mississippi, I met the most amazing seniors working for pay or volunteering at very interesting jobs. My encounters with them made me decide to share their stories in this newsletter to illustrate the joys of civic involvement.

I am sure you have read the stats about retirees who are giving back to their community. They are generally happier, healthier, and feel more connected to the outside world. There are lots of jobs that need doing, and we older folks are an army of potential workers who can help solve some of the issues facing society today.

### **1. Park Ranger**

While camping at Long Pine Key in Everglades National Park, I noticed an announcement on the message board about a ranger talk that evening. That's where I met Ken, a retired army man, working as a ranger. Two days later Ken turned out to be the leader of a bird walk on the Anhinga trail. He bubbled with enthusiasm as he pointed out birds along the route, and showed us an alligator's nest with a baby alligator swimming nearby. That evening he guided us on a night hike looking for signs of wild life. Soon we were staring at 50 pairs of alligator eyes shining up from the water below. They apparently group together at night to help in securing food.

Ken and his wife had whittled down their possessions and sold their house. Their permanent home is now their RV. In a few weeks he would be leaving for another assignment at Yellowstone National Park. What a life they had carved out for themselves. The visitors benefited tremendously from his tours and talks.

## **2. Campground Host**

A couple riding a golf cart around the campground caught my eye at the Long Pine Key campground. They turned out to be Charles and Barb Curtis, retirees from Albion, Pennsylvania, who were the Campground Hosts. They signed in late arrivals, checked on campsites, picked up litter, and answered campers' questions. On days off they enjoyed fishing. In exchange for volunteering they got a free space and hook up for their RV. They had previously worked as Campground Hosts at a Pennsylvania park. While camping in the Everglades, the park service asked them if they would stay and be hosts there. They agreed to extend their visit by one month in order to volunteer. Barb said she enjoyed it a lot and thought they might do it again for a longer time, perhaps taking an assignment in a part of the country they wanted to get better acquainted with.

To find out about other volunteer positions with the National Park Service and other government agencies go to: [www.nps.gov/volunteer/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/volunteer/index.htm)  
[www.volunteer.gov/gov](http://www.volunteer.gov/gov) [www.Americanhiking.org](http://www.Americanhiking.org)  
(events and volunteer opportunities)

## **3. Concession Worker**

Friends of mine, Marianna and Scott Broaddus, decided to work at one of the concessions at Yellowstone National Park. They were cashiers in the gift shop and restaurant and also worked in housekeeping for minimum wage. In return they had a room with private bath, couch and desk, three meals a day and use of the laundry for payment of \$60 a week. People from all over the world apply for these concession jobs in order to see America for cheap. Their fellow dorm mates, mostly in their mid 20's, were from South America, Asia, Russia,

Eastern Europe and Australia – making for fascinating company. On days off, Marianna and Scott would explore the park, hike in the Grand Tetons, and canoe the Snake River. They were gone all summer and had a ball. To learn about more opportunities for working at concessions in the National Parks check [www.xanterra.com](http://www.xanterra.com) or e-mail [info-corp@xanterra.com](mailto:info-corp@xanterra.com)

#### **4. Dog Walker**

The other day while out riding my bike, I stopped at a yard sale and bought a pot cover, a velvet hat, and four napkins for \$2! The woman waiting on me told me she was 81 and had no health problems. She looked terrific. When I asked her what kept her so healthy, she replied that she walked her dogs twice a day. Turned out she had a small business boarding dogs for businesspeople when they are out of town. The most she would take was five dogs at a time; and yes, she walked all five 1½ miles morning and night. The professional people paid well for her services and this helped expand her limited income – as did her yard sale!

#### **5. Katrina volunteer**

At the tail end of my four week Florida trip I met friends from my church in Gulfport, Mississippi, to work helping Katrina victims. Talk about a satisfying job! We were so appreciated as we painted, plastered, put up wall board, and cleared debris. Elijah, an elderly African American man, said he was so excited we were coming to plaster his newly installed wallboard that he couldn't sleep the night before. He lived in a very small FEMA trailer in front of his house. His wife, not liking the small quarters of the trailer, had gone north to live with relatives while the house was being repaired. On our last day he insisted on buying us ribs for lunch.

Lillie, a slight woman who suffered from severe arthritis, was thrilled as we cleared tons of debris from her front and back yard, put a second coat of paint on her living room walls, installed wall board in her kitchen, and planted a small garden beside her front steps. The garden's brightly colored

flowers shown like a beacon of hope in the darkness of rubble surrounding her house. The debris from toppled high rise condominiums extended from her home to the Gulf – about the length of a football field. Her husband was one of the fortunate ones who had a job. Each day he would return home around 3:30 p.m. to continue fixing up their house so they could move back in. For the time being they were staying with relatives.

The man overseeing our work at the Gateway Methodist Church was a volunteer from Iowa, a retired minister. Another older couple had volunteered their services for a month. Their job was checking on the work orders called in by people in need of help. People from many churches were working in Gulfport. We were there with three church groups from North Carolina and one from California. The residents we worked with said the only help they were getting right now was from the volunteer church groups. The government had not yet come through with the promised money/loans for rebuilding. We had collected money from our friends and church members and were able to put it into Home Depot credit cards so that crew leaders could just buy the needed supplies. This worked very well.

The experience really built strong bonds among our church group. Many of us want to return. We felt it was one of the most significant weeks in our life. The group that we worked through to arrange this trip was the Methodist Conference for Katrina Relief. They can be reached at 866-435-7091; mississippico199@bellsouth.net.

### **A Resource Guide for Aging Adventurers**

The references I have given here and many additional interesting opportunities that can save you a lot of money can be found in my booklet, *A Resource Guide for Aging Adventurers: Unusual, sometimes inexpensive opportunities for volunteering, learning, traveling, and adventure*. This 14-page booklet sells for \$12.60 and can be ordered from my web site,

[www.TheAgingAdventurer.com](http://www.TheAgingAdventurer.com)

