

MICHAEL HAMMETT MY TURN

Volunteer Phoenix brings 550,000 hours of service

The following was submitted by Michael Hammett of the Phoenix City Manager's Office.

The holiday season is a time of giving, sharing and receiving. There is a good chance that you or your family members have benefited from the kindness of a stranger, and you might not even know it. And you might well be the stranger who made a difference in someone else's life.

This past year, more than 36,000 of you volunteered your time through the city's Volunteer Phoenix program, amounting to more than 550,000 hours in all.

Volunteer Phoenix is a citywide program that brings together Phoenix service opportunities from more than 20 city departments to make it easy for you

to find the perfect volunteer opportunity to fit your skills and interests. These volunteer opportunities enhance, rather than replace, city jobs. They provide that extra level of service that makes our city one of the friendliest and most livable in the nation.

More than 400 volunteer navigators help make Phoenix Sky Harbor the "friendliest airport in the nation." Police and Fire department volunteers help keep our neighborhoods safe through the Explorer, COPS, Neighborhood Patrol, Reserves, Fire Cadet, Community Assistance and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs. Volunteers help the Human Services and Law departments provide extra care for our senior, veteran, youth and homeless populations.

Volunteers share their love of reading through programs at Phoenix libraries. There are thousands who donate their time to Parks and Neighborhood Services to wipe out graffiti, beautify our parks and inspire our youths to be part of the solution to the issues facing our city. There are also artful opportunities to make a difference as an usher at one of the Phoenix Convention Center venues, including the Orpheum, Symphony Hall and the Herberger, or as a docent at the Gallery @ City Hall.

The city of Phoenix is thankful for our amazing volunteers who provide that extra level of customer service to make Phoenix continue to shine bright.

If you would like to become a member of Volunteer Phoenix, visit our website, phoenix.gov/volunteer, and check out

all the great opportunities awaiting you. For more information, e-mail volunteer@phoenix.gov. Follow us on Twitter @myvolunteerphx. Here's to a happy, prosperous, and giving New Year. Make it your year of sharing!

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

To submit a letter to the editor of no more than 150 words, or a My Turn column of no more than 650 words, e-mail it along with your name, address and telephone number to wyatt.buchanan@arizonarepublic.com and put "Opinions" in the subject line. Letters may be edited for length, clarity and propriety.