

[http://www.emporiagazette.com/latest\\_news\\_and\\_features/article\\_fcdc0380-ccd5-570c-9a7e-f58890735aa6.html](http://www.emporiagazette.com/latest_news_and_features/article_fcdc0380-ccd5-570c-9a7e-f58890735aa6.html)

FEATURED TOP STORY

## Kansas ranks high for volunteerism

By Jessie Wagoner [jessie@emporia.com](mailto:jessie@emporia.com) Updated 1 hr ago



Volunteerism appears to be a top priority to Kansans. The 2016 Volunteering and Civic Life in America report was recently released and Kansas was ranked seventh nationally in volunteerism.

According to the report, on average, one out of 35 individuals volunteer in Kansas. More than 688,000 Kansans contributed more than 76 million hours of service in 2015.

"We're thrilled to see that Kansas is seventh in the nation for veteran volunteers, ninth for older adult volunteers and 10th for millennial and parent volunteers," Jessica Noble, executive director of the Kansas Volunteer Commission said. "We are proud of the volunteer spirit in our state. We want Kansans of all ages to build upon these numbers and strive to do more in 2017 and beyond."

Emporians follow closely with the state trend — making volunteering a priority in their daily lives. When asked on Facebook what organizations Gazette readers volunteer with, the answers were diverse. Katie Hunter of Americus volunteers with her church, Girl Scouts and 4-H. Kim Parks stays busy volunteering at Messiah Lutheran Church and the United Way of the Flint Hills, where she serves on multiple boards and committees. Churches, schools and community service organizations were the most popular.

The independent sector estimates the average value of a volunteer hour to be \$23.56. This results in the estimated value of volunteer service for Kansas at more than \$1.8 billion. Volunteering helps organizations and groups throughout the state, but according to those volunteering, they also experience benefits.

"I am a volunteer at SOS," Angie Baker of Emporia said. "It's rewarding and I can't think of a better use of my free time."

"When I volunteer my time I always feel better," Joyce Connor of Emporia said. "I know it helps the organization, but it helps me, too. I like contributing to my community and I've made lifelong friends that I wouldn't have ever met if it wasn't for volunteering."

For many families, volunteering is something they take part in together. Connor said she includes and encourages her children to volunteer just as her family encouraged her as a child.

"My grandparents were wonderful examples," Connor said. "They volunteered at the church, at the senior center and with other groups. If someone asked for help, they were the first people to step up and help. I try to be that example for my children. 'To whom much is given, much is expected.' It is a privilege to be able to help where possible."

The Kansas Volunteer Commission is urging Kansans to volunteer with their family and friends in the new year. To find local volunteer opportunities visit [www.volunteerkansas.com](http://www.volunteerkansas.com).

