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By FARAH TAMIZUDDIN/VOICE INTERN

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Summer might mean exciting trips to Mexico, sleeping until noon every day, and, just occasionally, being bored out of your mind.

To tackle the tedium, volunteering is a great way to get involved in Springfield and feel more fulfilled than watching TV for six hours.

All the charities and organizations listed here require no age or minimum time commitment and can be helped on a frequent or sporadic basis.

1. Ronald McDonald House: This charity offers a temporary residence for families with children in a Springfield hospital for extended stays. Teens can cook dinner on any day of the week or make Saturday brunch for the families at the house. The meal can be prepared ahead of time or at the house, and it can be a regular service or one-time-only.

If you speak a foreign language, know a craft such as quilting or knitting or have another talent you would like to share, the guests are always ready to learn. Call 528-3314 or visit www.st-johns.org:8080/default.htm for more information.

2. Lincoln Memorial Garden: Summer ecology camps are available for children ages 4 to 13 in one-week segments organized by age. There are six five-day sessions at which teen camp counselors can help adult counselors. The camps usually last from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (younger children stay only half a day) and are great for volunteers who like nature and young children. Call 529-1111 or visit www.lincolnmemorialgarden.org/articles_news/EcologyCamp.html for more information.

3. Senior Services Center/Daily Bread: This organization provides multiple services to seniors so they can live comfortably in their own homes. Daily Bread drives meals to seniors and is always in need of volunteers to drive or runners to assist elderly people who drive the meals but have trouble getting in and out of the car to deliver them. There are multiple places in the center to volunteer, such as the gift shop and kitchen. There are many activities, groups and classes that need leaders. Call Judy Donath or Cindy Troutner at 528-4035 or visit www.ssoci.org/volunteer.htm to volunteer.

4. Friends of Sangamon Valley: This group's goal is to preserve the natural heritage of the Sangamon River valley by restoring and protecting land in the river's watershed. There are multiple work days at places like Washington Park, Carpenter Park, Adams Wildlife Sanctuary and the Wolf Preserve, where volunteers remove invasive or exotic plants to protect indigenous ones. All you need is a pair of work gloves. Call George Rose at 787-1940 or visit <http://fosv.org/calendar.php> for dates of activities.

5. Reader Information Service at WUIS: The University of Illinois Springfield provides a radio station service through WUIS/WIPA that reaches blind, visually impaired or otherwise disabled individuals. Reader volunteers for the station can record books on tape or sign up to read the newspaper once a week. The equipment requires minimal training to be used and can be completed before volunteering. Call Sinta Seiber-Lane at 206-6404 to volunteer, or visit

www.wuis.org for more information.

6. Habitat for Humanity: This nonprofit organization builds houses for those in need. Anyone can volunteer to paint, plaster, clean or lay the foundation of a house. The work usually lasts all day but can be done in your own time frame. You can receive bimonthly email blasts of work days and sites by sending an email to Ryan Mobley at volunteer@habitatsangamon.com. Call 523-2710, ext. 14, or visit www.habitatsangamon.com/volunteer.html for more information.

7. St. John's Breadline: Run by Springfield Catholic Charities, the group needs volunteers to help serve food to guests. The food assistance service lasts from 10:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. Call Kevin Kindred or Linda Freer at 528-6098 to volunteer, or visit www.cc.dio.org/home.htm for more details.

8. Animal Protective League: Volunteers are always needed to help care for ill, abused or abandoned dogs and cats both at 1001 Taintor Road and various adoption sites in Springfield. Volunteers can walk dogs, pet cats, clean cat loft rooms or assist on adoption days. You must be 18 years old to work with dogs and 16 years old to work with cats unless a parent is present. Those who are 18 or older may also work in the spay/neuter clinic by making appointment phone calls and filing paperwork. Visit the APL's website at www.apl-shelter.org for an online application.

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