Volunteer opportunities abound

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Jessica Nelms/Staff

Clemson Child Development Center Administrative Assistant Linda Session, left, teaches parent volunteer Lanlan Chang how to work a laminator in the office, Thursday afternoon.

Not-for-profit organizations have long relied on volunteers to perform tasks that save time, manpower and money. Considering the current state of the economy, they are needed now more than ever.

Clemson Community Care (CCC), Clemson Child Development Center, Central-Clemson Indoor Rec Center, the United Way of Oconee County and the Foothills Area Family YMCA are among the organizations where volunteerism is more than welcome.

"Our organization relies heavily on volunteers to make our daily operations run for the food pantry, interview clients and perform clerical work," said Karen Ellers, executive director of CCC. "We also have a Manna truck, which operates once a month and requires 40 volunteers, a School Success and Christmas party that is basically run by volunteers."

Lori Terry, development officer for the Clemson Child Development Center (CCDC), said volunteers assist office staff, perform maintenance, go shopping to purchase supplies and throw holiday parties for the children who attend the center.

The volunteerism in place at the center even extends to the CCDC Board of Directors.

"They help raise money and assist in making improvements to the facility," Terry said. "Board members come and open doors, assist in grant writing and fundraising. In fact, one of our Board of Directors is our librarian."

Terry said three of the center's volunteers have their own nickname — The Three Wise Men. The trio — composed of Malcolm Skove (one of the original founders), Max Sherrill and Bill Neckerman — are all in their late 70s and report each Monday morning to the Calhoun Bridge Center to offer their assistance.

During most afternoons, Terry said volunteers sit at the front desk to monitor those entering and exiting the building. One volunteer updates the center's Web site.

The Foothills Area Family YMCA provides games and activities for individuals in Oconee and Pickens counties. Executive Director Anna Connelly said volunteers represent "a multitude of capacities."

"We attract Girl and Boy Scout troops, college students, parents, retirees, as well as other large groups who have a desire to give back," Connelly said. "College student volunteers explore future career opportunities while getting a better feel for where their interests and talents lie. Retirees interact with youth, bringing smiles, laughter and an injection of simplicity."

Connelly said the Y has attracted many volunteers to coach the soccer and basketball programs, with 80 percent of its soccer coaches and 90 percent of its basketball coaches having been college students last year.

"Without the parents or students as coaches, our programs would not exist," Connelly said.

Not only do volunteers assist when it comes to coaching, Connelly said they also provide a tremendous boost in preparing for the more than 80 campers who frequent the Y each week in the summer. Connelly said volunteers also create and assist at special events.

Volunteerism, Connelly said, has benefits other than the contribution of time and energy.

"It allows the citizens to give back to society, to break down barriers of misunderstanding and preconceived notions, to assuage fear and broaden the exploration of personal growth," she said. "Becoming a volunteer is also an outlet for fun and focus on something other than areas of work and scholastics."