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**VOLUNTEER FLORIDA ANNOUNCES
FLORIDA'S OFFICIAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES PLATFORM**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, **Volunteer Florida CEO Clay Ingram and First Lady Casey DeSantis** announced that Florida's official volunteer opportunities platform, Volunteer Connect, launched to nonprofits with 501(c)(3) status and government entities.

Throughout the summer, organizations can register on Volunteer Connect, participate in instructional webinars and training and begin posting future volunteer opportunities. The platform will then be made available to the public in fall 2019, engaging volunteers in education, environmental protection, disaster relief and much more.

"Our great state works better when we work together and the launch of Volunteer Connect will facilitate the mobilization of volunteers during emergencies and help coordinate relief efforts for our neighbors in times of need," **said First Lady Casey DeSantis**. "The Governor and I believe that government must constantly strive to improve how we serve taxpayers and Volunteer Connect brings our resources under one umbrella. Volunteerism is an essential part of our great civic duty and I encourage all Floridians who are able to consider volunteering locally to do so."



“At Volunteer Florida, we understand that it’s often challenging for organizations to recruit available, qualified volunteers,” said **CEO Ingram**. “Volunteer Connect will simplify this process, serving as a centralized hub for sharing volunteer opportunities, monitoring volunteer sign-up and communicating important information to volunteers.”

“We’re grateful that Volunteer Florida recognized the need for this platform within Florida’s nonprofit sector and then took the initiative to develop it,” said **Sabeen Perwaiz Syed, Executive Director of the Florida Nonprofit Alliance**. “We encourage all eligible organizations to use Volunteer Connect to strengthen their daily operations, fulfill their respective missions and ultimately create more vibrant communities across the state.”

“Florida Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) is proud to expand our partnership with Volunteer Florida,” said **Jessica Geib, Chair of Florida VOAD**.

“With Volunteer Connect, our member organizations will be able to connect with more volunteers in a shorter amount of time, creating additional opportunities to help our communities respond and recover faster.”

All eligible organizations can use Volunteer Connect to:

- Promote volunteer opportunities, searchable by date, location, issue area and age/population served
- Schedule volunteers by general availability or specific shift request
- Track volunteer sign-up, onsite attendance and service hours
- Communicate with volunteer teams or individuals
- Access exclusive volunteer management trainings



“By harnessing the energy of those who want to volunteer their time, we can steer Florida’s children in the direction of success. Mentoring programs are an incredible example of adults supplementing the work taking place in the classroom and providing a new perspective students may not have considered. School volunteers can also play an invaluable role in students’ lives by offering insight into career paths they be interested in and helping them determine the best way to reach their goals,” said **Richard Corcoran, Commissioner of Education**. “I appreciate CEO Clay Ingram creating a central platform for Florida volunteers to positively impact the lives of Florida students.”

“Volunteers are an integral part of our organization,” said **Jim Whittaker, President and CEO of the Arc Jacksonville**. “We look forward to using Volunteer Connect to connect with volunteers who share our vision of a rich and fulfilling life for individuals with intellectual and developmental differences in our community.”

“We’re looking forward to using Volunteer Connect to promote our internal volunteer programs,” said **Richard Prudom, Secretary of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs**. “It will also be an innovative, cost-effective resource for local organizations that rely on volunteers to serve Florida’s elderly population.”

“Volunteer Florida has already expanded Metropolitan Ministries’ reach in the community by adding over 500 high-skill volunteers in the last year,” said **Nathan Gula, Associate Director of Volunteer Services at Metropolitan Ministries**. “With Volunteer Connect, the opportunity to connect people’s passion for service with the perfect fit in their own backyard has me thrilled to see what will be possible in the next year to come.”



“Volunteers are the heart and soul of the Florida Park Service,” said **Eric Draper, Florida State Parks Director**. “Volunteer Florida is a valuable partner and we’re happy to have a new tool for connecting people with meaningful service opportunities in state parks.”

“We are always looking for new ways to grow our exceptional team of volunteers and raise awareness about the important work we do to make the arts accessible to everyone in our community,” **said Trish Brennan, Vice President of Human Resources for the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County**. “We’re excited that Volunteer Connect promises to help us reach prospective volunteers whose skills can benefit the Arsht Center and other nonprofits throughout the state of Florida.”

Organizations interested in registering with Volunteer Connect should visit www.volunteerflorida.org to learn more.

Information about the public launch of Volunteer Connect will be released soon. For updates, please contact newsletter@volunteerflorida.org and request to join Volunteer Florida's email distribution list.

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