Greater Cleveland Volunteers
Connecting you with opportunities to serve

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## Registration now open for the inaugural CLE Pickle Fest® 5K

It's time to lace up your sneakers! Greater Cleveland Volunteers is excited to announce the inaugural Cleveland Pickle Fest® 5K as part of this year's festival. The race steps off at 10 a.m. on Saturday, October 3 on Mall C in Downtown Cleveland and is open to runners and walkers of all ages.

Cleveland PICKLE FEST®
Brought to you by Greater Cleveland Volunteers

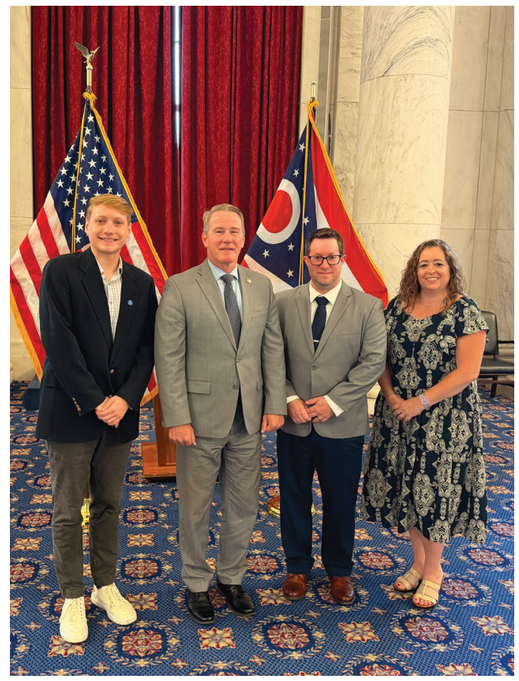
Each participant will receive a special race T-shirt and a general admission ticket to Cleveland Pickle Fest®. Stick around after the race to enjoy pickle-themed food and drink, contests, live music, a kid's zone, and lots of pickle-packed excitement. All festival proceeds support Greater Cleveland Volunteers and its programs.

Visit **clevelandpicklefest.com/5k-info** to learn more and register for the Cleveland Pickle Fest® 5K today! Not a 5K person? No problem! Get your festival tickets at **clevelandpicklefest.com/tickets** and join the pickle party.

Greater Cleveland Volunteers is an AmeriCorps Seniors grantee and receives funds through their RSVP program.
The views expressed in this newsletter are the author's and do not represent AmeriCorps.

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# Greater Cleveland Volunteers Brings Its Voice to DC



Last month I traveled to Washington, D.C., for a week focused on two closely connected parts of Greater Cleveland Volunteers' mission: strengthening the field of volunteer engagement and ensuring that the value of national service is understood by those making federal policy and funding decisions. The trip included participation in the Points of Light Conference, meetings with congressional offices, and opportunities to collaborate with nonprofit colleagues from across Ohio. Together, these experiences reinforced an important lesson that nonprofits do not need large lobbying teams or substantial advocacy budgets to make their voices heard. Rather, mission-driven organizations like GCV need clear messages, credible data, strong partnerships, and compelling stories about the people and communities affected by public policy.

During this trip, I met with legislative staff from the offices of Representative Marcy Kaptur, Representative Shontel Brown, Senator Bernie Moreno, and Senator Jon Husted. I was joined at several of these visits by colleagues from other Ohio organizations that administer AmeriCorps Seniors programs, including United Senior Services and Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging. Their participation helped demonstrate that the impact of national service is not limited to one organization or one part of the state. From Northeast Ohio to Clark County, organizations are seeing older adults use their experience, time and talents to address critical community needs.

During our meetings, our message was straightforward. We shared how important resources and funding for AmeriCorps Seniors is and how it is a proven, smart and cost-effective public investment. These programs provide the infrastructure needed to recruit, train, place and support older adult volunteers.

## GCV Advocates for Volunteerism Continued

Through RSVP, the Foster Grandparent Program and the Senior Companion Program, volunteers help address food insecurity, educational needs, transportation barriers, social isolation, health access, and the ability of older adults to remain safely in their homes. Volunteers may provide the service, but successful volunteer engagement does not happen automatically. Federal support makes it possible for organizations to connect the right people with the right opportunities and sustain those relationships over time.

We also emphasized the strong return on investment produced by AmeriCorps Seniors. Volunteer-led transportation, companionship, food access, wellness programs, tutoring, and so many other services can address needs before they require more expensive interventions from health care, long-term care, or other public systems. One of the most valuable parts of the trip was hearing the questions congressional staff asked. In one meeting, we were asked to clarify the specific funding level we hoped Congress would support. That question was a useful reminder that strong advocacy must combine stories and impact with a clear and specific policy request. In other meetings, we were met with immediate support and agreement. It was heartening to know our volunteers have fervent supporters in Congress who understand how substantial the impact is that you all are making. These meetings were not about expecting an immediate legislative victory or funding announcement. In reality, advocacy rarely works that way. Our goal this year was to foster active relationships with legislators and ensure that the voices of our organization and of our volunteers continue to be heard.

Greater Cleveland Volunteers will continue building relationships with policymakers, strengthening partnerships with fellow nonprofits, and advocating for investments that support volunteerism, national service, older adults, and healthy communities. The decisions affecting our mission and national volunteer programs will be made whether or not we participate. We intend to be part of the conversation and continue to advocate for volunteerism. We will be persistent in standing up and showcasing the impact that all of you make daily because we know that volunteering is an essential part of our community that makes our region a stronger, more prosperous place for all.

— Kevin Gross, GCV Executive Director

## GCV Welcomes City Fresh as New Partner Agency

City Fresh is a farm box program working to increase food access in Northeast Ohio while building community and supporting local farmers. Volunteers are needed to help run weekly neighborhood pickup locations, or "Fresh Stops," at locations throughout Cuyahoga County.

## Be the Reason a Child Learns to Love Reading

A child's reading level is uniquely tied to his or her likelihood of graduating from high school. In fact, children who can't read at grade level by fourth grade are four times more likely not to graduate from high school. You can use your knowledge and experience to change this statistic and help guide the next generation of readers!

AARP Foundation Experience Corps is a volunteer program that trains individuals to tutor students in first through fourth grade to become better readers. Greater Cleveland Volunteers, a proud program partner of AARP Foundation Experience Corps, is looking for individuals to volunteer in person at select Cleveland Metropolitan and Euclid City Schools. As an Experience Corps volunteer tutor, you'll implement a structured tutoring method that helps students become more fluent and confident readers.

Interested in making a difference for local elementary students? Learn more and apply to become a volunteer today at **bit.ly/GCVExpCorps** or call 216-391-9500 x2119.

## Upcoming Event Opportunities

**Cleveland Pickle Fest® and 5K** (Greater Cleveland Volunteers): Celebrate Cleveland, pickles and volunteerism while offering a helping hand at Cleveland Pickle Fest® on Saturday, October 3 to benefit Greater Cleveland Volunteers! Join the team on Mall C in Downtown Cleveland and assist with admissions, at beverage ticket sales or festival tents, or with the pickle eating contest. Shifts are available between 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Join us early and volunteer at the inaugural 5K race from 7:45 to 11 a.m.

**CLE Big Wheel Relay** (Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center): Ready, set, pedal! The 14th annual Cleveland Big Wheel Relay to benefit the Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center will take place on Saturday, August 29 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Cleveland's East side. Join the team and help with raffle sales, time trials and pit crew, or setup/breakdown.

**One World Day** (Cleveland Cultural Gardens): Help Cleveland celebrate multiculturalism at One World Day at the Cleveland Cultural Gardens in University Circle on Sunday, August 30 from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Offer your helping hand as a parade volunteer or in the beer gardens. Volunteers are also needed for setup on Saturday, August 29.

Visit **greaterclevols.vsyslive.com** to learn more about these great volunteer opportunities and others throughout Cuyahoga County. Contact Program Manager Nancy Dzurnak at contact@greaterclevelandvolunteers.org or 216-391-9500 x2123 for additional information.