

Show off the Big Apple's shine

If you love New York City and meeting new people, then Big Apple Greeter has the perfect volunteer opportunity for you. This not-for-profit organization connects business and leisure travelers with enthusiastic local volunteers who help visitors get to know New York City through the eyes of a New Yorker.

A Greeter welcomes visitors to New York City—maximum six people at a time—walks with visitors through neighborhoods that the Greeter knows well, shares local information only a New Yorker might know, and makes personal suggestions on shopping, restaurants and places to visit. A Greeter also introduces visitors to public transportation, showing them how easy it is to use the subways and buses.

Visitors and Greeters are matched by the language the visitors speak, the neighborhoods the visitors would like to visit, and, when possible, by interests shared. More than 65,000 visitors from every state and 124 countries have been introduced to New York through Big Apple Greeter.

To become a Greeter, you must enjoy meeting and talking with people. You also must be familiar with, and upbeat about, the City and public transportation. People with knowledge of foreign languages or American Sign Language are especially needed.

Greeters must be available at least one day a month for at least four hours; the dates and times you

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volunteer are flexible. You may explore neighborhoods in any of the five boroughs, but usually visitors are first met in Manhattan (and always in a public place).

If you prefer a behind-the-scenes role, consider volunteering at the office's headquarters in downtown Manhattan. Time commitments vary by position. There are many such volunteer positions, including writing and editing the newsletter, matching Greeters with visitors, assisting in the office, doing data entry, and helping organize special events.

To be considered for a Greeter or office volunteer position, you must fill out an application, available on the website, **www.bigapplegreeter.org**. You may also request a form by calling (212) 669-7308, e-mailing **volunteerdepartment@bigapplegreeter.org**, or writing the office at 1 Centre St., New York, NY 10007. Big Apple Greeter welcomes New Yorkers with disabilities to explore all its volunteer opportunities.

Don't live in New York City anymore? Contact your local tourism department or city council office for information about volunteer opportunities in your area. There are similar "welcome visitor" programs in other cities. Big Apple Greeter is part of The Global Greeter Network, a voluntary association of independent welcoming programs around the world. All the programs are free, offer greeter services as an individual or small group experience, and are characterized by enthusiastic resident volunteers who love their home cities. Programs include Chicago Greeter, Houston Greeter, Golden Heart Greeter (Fairbanks, AK), Tap into TO (Toronto, Canada), Melbourne Greeters and Adelaide Greeters (both in Australia) and Cicerones (Buenos Aires, Argentina).