



Caring for the Upper Mississippi River: Volunteering in America

Name _____ Date _____

Read, analyze, and hypothesize

1. Read the excerpt below from *“Volunteer Growth in America: A Review of Trends Since 1974,” Volunteering in America* by the Corporation for National and Community Service.
2. Review and discuss the findings with your group.
3. Form a hypothesis about the volunteer trends described.

Read below

Throughout the history of the United States, Americans have valued an ethic of service. As Alexis deTocqueville wrote over a century and a half ago, this ethic of service “prompts [Americans] to assist one another and inclines them willingly to sacrifice a portion of their time and property to the welfare of the state.”

Today, the ethic remains strong as Americans of all ages donate their time to schools, churches, hospitals, and other local nonprofits in an effort to improve their communities. Every day, people across the country mentor students, beautify neighborhoods, help older Americans to live independently, restore homes after disasters, and much more.

- Volunteering is at a 30-year high.
 - The adult volunteer rate declined by 15% between 1974 and 1989 (23.6% to 20.4%, respectively) but rebounded to a new high today (27%). In fact, the adult volunteering rate increased by more than 32% since 1989.
 - The growth in volunteering has been driven primarily by three age groups: older teenagers (ages 16 to 19); mid-life adults (ages 45 to 64); and older adults (65 years old and over).
 - Volunteering that takes place through an educational or youth service organization had the largest increase between 1989 and today. While 15.1% of all volunteers served through or with an educational or youth service

organization in 1989, 24.6% of all volunteers serve through or with an educational organization today, a 63% increase.

- Volunteering among teenagers (ages 16 to 19) has dramatically increased since 1989.
 - While volunteer rates among teenagers declined between 1974 and 1989 (20.9% and 13.4%, respectively), the percentage of teenagers who volunteer more than doubled between 1989 and 2005 (from 13.4% to 28.4%).
 - While the teenage volunteering rate has increased significantly over the last 30 years, teenagers continue to be primarily interested in episodic volunteering (contributing 99 or fewer hours a year). Today, 67.9% of teenagers are episodic volunteers.
 - Teenage volunteers are significantly more likely to serve with educational or youth service organizations today (34.7% in 2005 vs. 26.8% in 1989). In fact, volunteering with religious organizations (30.3% in 2005 vs. 34.4% in 1989) was the most common place that teenagers volunteered in 1989, but it is now the second most popular place for teenager volunteering, behind educational organizations.
 - More teenage volunteers are also serving with social and community service organizations today (12.9% in 2005 vs. 7% in 1989).

