

Wells Fargo Volunteers: Creating a Culture of Service and Caring for Communities



Monica Mitchell, a Wells Fargo volunteer, used the company's Volunteer Leave Program to start an all-girls charter school in Baltimore.

**Quick Facts:**

**Company:** Wells Fargo

**HQ:** San Francisco, California

**Employees:** 264,000

**Corporate assets deployed in program:** volunteers, financial contributions

**Engagement models:** hands-on volunteering, skills-based volunteering, board service, virtual volunteering

**Geography:** Global

When Mary Ann Buggs and her husband moved to Vallejo, California, they were shocked by the hunger and the need they saw. The city had been hit hard by the Great Recession and 40,000 people had recently lost their jobs when a Navy based closed. "We saw so many people struggling," said Mary Ann. "It just tugged at our hearts. My husband turned to me and said, 'I think we have to feed these people.'" Once a single mother on food assistance herself, Mary knew what a lifeline a food bank could be. So, she and her husband Ben set out to start [Faith Food Fridays](#), a food shelf that has grown to serve 200 families a week, engaging thousands of volunteers from the community, their church and Wells Fargo.

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Monica Mitchell, a Senior Relationship Manager in Community Banking with Wells Fargo, did something few others would dream of doing. She took three months of leave through the company's Volunteer Leave Program to start [Lillie May Jackson Carroll Charter School](#), an all-girls charter school in Baltimore. There, middle-school girls will receive high quality experiential learning opportunities in a city with a struggling public school system. "The volunteer leave from Wells Fargo gave me the time I needed to hire an executive director and principal, learn about education policy and fundraise. We raised over \$1 million for the school by appealing to many major foundations. Everybody told us we couldn't do it," said Monica. The school opened in August 2015 with an inaugural class of 78 students.

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When Ty Dunker, a technology manager at Wells Fargo, started volunteering to help refugees through his church in Des Moines, he soon realized he was playing the role of a surrogate parent. "The kids and teens would ask me for help with homework, translating for their parents at school conferences and with finding summer jobs," said

Ty. It was then he had the idea that if they were employed as tellers at Wells Fargo, they would have access to careers and be able to serve the unique needs of their community. Ty walked into a store branch in his neighborhood and broached the subject with Store Manager Jeremy Bethards, who agreed to start interviewing candidates. One of those was Lweh Moo, who was born in a refugee camp in Thailand and moved to the U.S. with her family at age 11. "I instantly knew that I had to hire her," said Jeremy. "I knew that she would be able to build a personal and emotional connection with our customers." Lweh now works as a Wells Fargo teller in the Beavertdale neighborhood of Des Moines.

### Wells Fargo Volunteers

Mary Ann, Monica and Ty were all able to accomplish great things as volunteers in their community with the support of their employer, Wells Fargo. The company has a culture of service and caring that was inspired at its founding in 1852 when co-founder Henry Wells said, "Our lives are not measured by the number of years and days we exist, but by what we accomplish while we live, and the good we may render to our fellow man." That heritage holds true today, and is demonstrated by the work of the company's volunteer program, Wells Fargo Volunteers.



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-- Melissa Buchanan, Global Volunteerism Manager at Wells Fargo

In 2014, more than 64,000 team members volunteered 1.74 million volunteer hours and helped thousands of nonprofits around the world, from Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together to United Way Worldwide. "Our team member volunteers come from every line of business and every region—they are full-time and part-time, managers and individual contributors, executives and entry-level employees," said Melissa Buchanan, Global Volunteerism Manager at Wells Fargo. "The one constant is that they are able to volunteer for the organizations where they have a passion to serve."

What makes Wells Fargo Volunteers an effective employee volunteer program? Wells Fargo structures its program to provide resources, support and recognition opportunities to encourage team members to get involved in their communities. It has **112 active volunteer chapters**, spanning 41 states and 10 countries. These chapters are local community-involvement networks that are organized in local markets and allow the company to scale its volunteer footprint globally while being locally relevant. More than 37,000 team members participated in these chapters in 2014.

Wells Fargo also provides **16 hours of volunteer paid time off** to team members who have been with the company at least six months. Those who have been with the company for five years can apply for the **Volunteer Leave Program**—the same program that helped Monica Mitchell—which **provides full pay and benefits for up to three months** while team members volunteer on projects of significant impact at a nonprofit or school of their choice.

Wells Fargo also offers a variety of recognition programs. Connecting to the trend of gamification, it enters volunteers into a **“Cash for My Cause” Sweepstakes**, which provides grants to nonprofits on behalf of volunteers. They are automatically entered to win the quarterly Sweepstakes when they record their volunteer hours in My Volunteer Time, the company’s online volunteer database and tracking tool.

Through **Volunteer Service Awards**, the company honors extraordinary team members and their service by providing cash grants to the nonprofits and schools where they have volunteered. In 2014, Wells Fargo recognized 218 team members at home and around the world with grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$25,000. Mary Ann Buggs won a \$10,000 Volunteer Service Award in 2014 for her work with Faith Food Fridays. “The grant from Wells Fargo helped us purchase 350 turkey dinners for families during the holidays. It helped immeasurably during one of our busiest times,” she said.

Wells Fargo’s volunteer chapter structure, incentives and volunteer recognition all work hand-in-hand to support a thriving culture of service and caring at the company.

### The Impact

Wells Fargo’s culture of service and caring translates to big impact in communities. The company has seen a steady rise in the number of team members volunteering over the years. In 2014, Wells Fargo volunteers contributed 1.74 million hours to communities, up from 1.33 million hours in 2010. Wells Fargo’s volunteer time in 2014 was valued at \$40.1 million, according to the Independent Sector.

The service experience is often transformative for Wells Fargo team members, leading to increased engagement. “When we started Faith Food Fridays, our only thought was that we wanted to feed hungry people,” said Mary Ann. “Over the past five years, I’ve learned so much about compassion and giving an encouraging word. I wasn’t like that before—I really look forward to my Fridays, and hope that never ends.”

Wells Fargo also measures success by the impact that team members have



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-- Laurel Freedman, Executive Director, Lillie May Jackson Carroll Charter School.

on their community partners. This is best described in the words of Laurel Freedman, Executive Director of the Lillie May Jackson Carroll charter school that Monica Mitchell founded. “I believe the best gift we can give a child is education,” Laurel said. “The Baltimore City school system faces many challenges, and with Lillie May, we are creating an environment of caring adults the students can rely on. They have a right to an amazing education.”

Because of Monica, more than 300 girls in Baltimore will have access to a better education and brighter futures. Because of Mary Ann, 200 more families in Vallejo have a place to go to get food and support resources. And because of Ty, the refugee community in Des Moines now has an opportunity for career pathways and can give back to their own community.

To learn more about Wells Fargo’s corporate citizenship work, read its [2014 Impact Report](#). Wells Fargo is a member of the Points of Light Corporate Service Council. This year, we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Council, the premier global platform for mobilizing, equipping and inspiring high-impact volunteering. Council members include 90 of the world’s largest and most successful companies. To learn more, visit: [www.pointsoflight.org/for-companies](http://www.pointsoflight.org/for-companies).