

# COMMUNITY

## The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

### The Benefits of Volunteering

Regardless of where you live, virtually every community has programs that rely on volunteers to operate. Hospitals, homeless shelters, schools, local theater and just about every other community-oriented program you can think of has a need for volunteers to keep it up and running.

And yet many of us don't volunteer. Of course, we have plenty of excuses. Lack of time, work demands, family responsibilities, we're too old—it's a long excuse list that you might think about as you sit front of the TV most nights wondering why you're bored or lonely or feeling somewhat irrelevant.

One of the main benefits of volunteering is that it can perk up an otherwise fairly static social life. Volunteering offers the opportunity to make connections with the people you are helping and provides the chance to cultivate friendships with other volunteers.

Studies have found that when you volunteer your time and skills, and increase your social interaction, you are likely to improve both your mental and physical health. Experts advise that consistent socializing can lead to better brain functioning and help reduce the risk for depression and anxiety.

These benefits are particularly important in helping improve our lives as we get older. Surveys have found that some 45 percent of people admit to feeling lonely and that as many as one in ten people report having no close friends. Clearly, the improvement in socializing that comes with volunteering pays dividends in these areas, and those are dividends that accumulate regardless of age.

Volunteering to help with organizations serving the less fortunate is not only a way of doing something good for your community but also can bring a variety of personal benefits. It's been shown to be a way to improve self-esteem and to help develop emotional stability.

Some research has shown that people who volunteer may be at lower risk for dementia as they age and that volunteer activities may help strengthen the immune system. Studies have found that seniors often gain real physical benefits from volunteering, including a possible reduction in heart disease and a general sense of feeling younger.

Volunteering isn't a magic cure for all of life's ills, but it is a way to stay more active, to contribute to your community and to expand and strengthen your social life. And all of that can add up to a happier and healthier you.

Counseling Corner is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcorner@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcorner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).

## Best Friends During Our Worst Times: Consider Fostering a Shelter Pet During the Coronavirus Crisis, Says American Humane ... For Their Sake—and Yours

By MARK STUBIS  
American Humane

WASHINGTON (March 17, 2020)—For thousands of years, our companion animals have been our best friends in good times and bad. Now, as we face one of the worst pandemics in modern history, accompanied by the fear and loneliness that come hand in hand with the isolation of mandatory quarantining, we have a chance to make a difference in the lives of millions of animals—and our own—by fostering a shelter animal.

"Shelters are swamped in the best of times, and with more and more staff in every sector of American life self-quarantining and falling ill, animals already abandoned and without homes are going to be increasingly vulnerable," says American Humane President and CEO Dr. Robin Ganzert. "At the same time, so many of us, especially the elderly, are coping with the loneliness, stress and anxiety that comes with isolation and the sheltering in place so necessary during a pandemic. Why be home alone when you can snuggle up with a loving new buddy? You might save a life, improve your own during these trying times, and end up with a new best friend."

Each year, some 4–6 million beautiful animals end up in U.S. shelters and more than one and a half million are euthanized. As shelter workers are affected by the virus and false rumors spread about the transmissibility of CV-19 from animals

to people (there is no evidence of this), shelter animals will need help more than ever.

The rewards of fostering a pet can be great for both people and animals. Animals facing uncertain futures can find the love, care and attention every living creature needs. And engaging with animals has been shown to be a remedy for stress. When people are in high-pressure situations, the hormone cortisol spikes in the body, making it a useful tool for measuring stress. Interaction with animals is proven to lower both cortisol levels and blood pressure, according to the National Institutes of Health. In other words, science backs up what many people know intuitively—they feel better after petting a dog or cat.

Amber Batteiger is a case in point. An American Humane Rescue worker who deploys year-round to save animals from natural disasters and cruelty cases, she is now enjoying the company of her new foster dog and "pandemic pal," Tux, a two-year-old American Bulldog mix she fostered for a rescue group out of Coral Springs, Florida called "Bullies-N-Beyond." She finds his company a welcome distraction from the news and he is enjoying all the extra attention, treats and playing with his three foster siblings that living with Amber gives him.

"If you have the time, the desire and the physical and financial ability to foster an animal from a local shelter or rescue for at least the next several weeks, it will



PHOTO COURTESY AMERICAN HUMANE

Amber and Tux Meltwater

be a much-needed and welcome way to help," says Dr. Ganzert. "Please think about it and spread the word. You will be helping yourself and an animal in need... and best of all, only their unconditional love is contagious."

American Humane is the country's first national humane organization. Founded in 1877, American Humane saves, shelters, feeds, and protects some one billion animals around the world each year. Visit [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org). Follow us on Facebook, Twitter.

Visit Facebook: PGC Department of the Environment, @PGCDoE, March 17, 2020, for more info on adoption / fostering pets

## Online Library & Drive-up WiFi Available 24/7 During Health Emergency

By NICHOLAS A. BROWN  
PGCMLS

LARGO, Md. (March 18, 2020)—The Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) is providing access to free resources and services online 24/7 throughout the COVID-19 health emergency and while the Library's branches are closed until further notice. Customers can access online library content with their library cards via [pgcmls.info](http://pgcmls.info). The Library's wide range of online resources and apps include curated content collections, such as PGCMLS Digital Suite and PGCMLS Creative Suite, and over 85 online resources for all ages. Special content is available for kids, teens, and educators. The resources cover 12 different categories, including languages (Mango Languages), academics (The Great Courses), jobs and careers (Career Transitions), and academics (Brainfuse HelpNow tutoring). The Library also offers accredited online high school education for adults (Career Online High School).

Though Library branches are closed, drive-up public WiFi is accessible from all PGCMLS parking lots and the exterior of permanent and temporary PGCMLS facilities (except for pop-up locations and branches that are under construction: Surratts-Clinton and Hyattsville). Drive up to your local branch to check email, download eBooks or audiobooks, use online resources, or access community resources online.

Customers are encouraged to track their reading during the Library's closure with the "Spring Into Reading" program, available through Beanstack (March 16–May 17, 2020). Readers can log daily accomplishments and unlock badges as they progress. Families with children under the age of five can also register for the Books from Birth program, a partnership between PGCMLS and the Dolly Parton Foundation that sends children a free book once a month by mail. Register here.

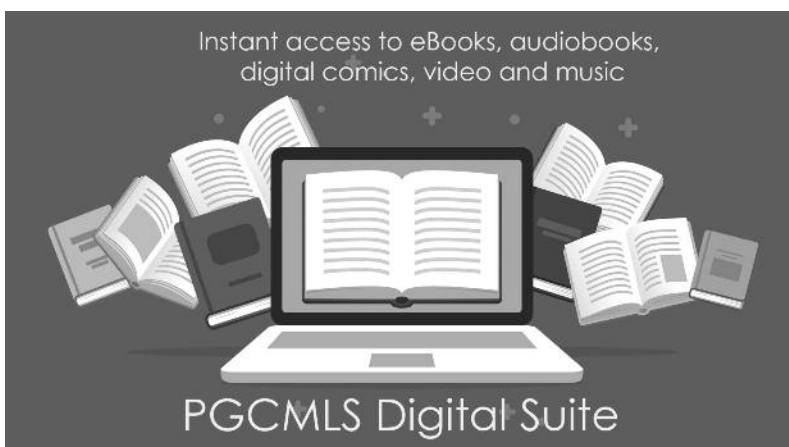
During the public health emergency, PGCMLS is maintaining a COVID-19 webpage that shares current County Health Department guidance and highlights special temporary resources for all ages and businesses from cultural organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, health-care providers, and utilities. Explore the list of temporary resources (Español), which is being regularly updated. The Library is also promoting a

virtual events for all ages throughout the closure, including children's programs and health information events. Visit the PGCMLS Facebook page for details.

Spanish speaking customers are invited to explore the Library's "Su biblioteca" portal, which features numerous community resources and information about the online library. The Library also has a new Spanish Facebook page where customers can connect with staff and resources. Publicamos una página de Facebook en español! Siguenos aquí.

What to do with physical materials during the closure:

- Hold onto books, DVDs, and other materials until PGCMLS reopens
- Fines incurred during the closure will be waived
- Book drops are closed
- Please do not leave materials outside at libraries



### Featured Online Resources:

- **PGCMLS Digital Suite**
- ComicPlus (digital graphic novels and comics)
- Freegal (streaming and downloadable music)
- Hoopla (streaming movies, tv programs, and music)
- Kanopy (streaming movies, documentaries, and tv programs)
- Libby by OverDrive (audiobooks and eBooks)
- RBDigital (magazines, audiobooks, and streaming video)

### PGCMLS Creative Suite

- Artist Works (online music lessons)
- Creative Bug (arts and craft activities and classes)
- The Great Courses (online courses, including creative disciplines)
- Hobbies and Crafts Reference Center (hobby and craft resources)
- PebbleGo (research skills for K-3 students)
- Qello (concerts and music documentaries, ranging from classical to country)

### Meal Sites from A1

may not pick up meals for children. Student IDs are not required.

The full list of sites is below:

- **Andrew Jackson Academy**, 3500 Regency Parkway, Forestville
- **Benjamin Stoddert Middle School**, 2501 Olson Street, Temple Hills
- **Benjamin Tasker Middle School**, 4901 Collington Road, Bowie
- **Buck Lodge Middle School**, 2611 Buck Lodge Road, Adelphi
- **Calverton Elementary**, 3400 Beltsville Road, Beltsville
- **Carmody Hills Elementary**, 401 Jadeleaf Ave., Capitol Heights
- **Clinton Grove Elementary**, 9420 Temple Hill Road, Clinton
- **District Heights Elementary**, 2200 County Road, District Heights
- **Drew-Freeman Middle School**, 2600 Brooks Drive, Suitland
- **Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School**, 13725 Briarwood Drive, Laurel
- **Gladys Noon Spellman Elementary**, 3324 64th Avenue, Cheverly
- **Hillcrest Heights Elementary**, 4305 22nd Place, Temple Hills
- **J. Frank Dent Elementary**, 2700 Corning Ave., Fort Washington
- **John Bayne Elementary**, 7010 Walker Mill Road, Capitol Heights
- **Judge Sylvania Woods Elementary**, 3000 Church St., Glenarden
- **Kenmoor Middle School**, 2500 Kenmoor Drive, Landover
- **Kettering Middle School**, 65 Herrington Drive, Upper Marlboro
- **Langley Park-McCormick Elementary**, 8201 15th Ave., Hyattsville

- **Laurel Elementary**, 516 Montgomery St., Laurel
- **Lewisdale Elementary**, 2400 Banning Place, Hyattsville
- **Longfields Elementary**, 3300 Newkirk Ave., Forestville
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School**, 4545 Ammendale Road, Beltsville
- **Nicholas Orem Middle School**, 6100 Editors Park Drive, Hyattsville
- **Oxon Hill Middle School**, 9570 Fort Foote Road, Fort Washington
- **Port Towns Elementary**, 4351 58th Ave., Bladensburg
- **Samuel Chase Elementary**, 5700 Fisher Road, Temple Hills
- **Springhill Lake Elementary**, 6060 Springhill Drive, Greenbelt
- **Stephen Decatur Middle School**, 8200 Pinewood Drive, Clinton
- **Suitland Elementary**, 4650 Towne Park Road, Suitland
- **Templeton Elementary**, 6001 Carters Lane, Riverdale
- **Thomas S. Stone Elementary**, 4500 34th Street, Mount Rainier
- **Thurgood Marshall Middle School**, 4909 Brinkley Road, Temple Hills
- **Waldon Woods Elementary**, 10301 Thrift Road, Clinton
- **Walker Mill Middle School**, 800 Karen Blvd., Capitol Heights
- **William Paca Elementary**, 7801 Sheriff Road, Landover
- **William Wirt Middle School**, 6200 Tuckerman St., Riverdale Park

For more information, visit [www.pgcps.org/coronavirus](http://www.pgcps.org/coronavirus).

## BGE Donates to Local Nonprofits For Coronavirus Response and Relief

\$175,000 to Maryland organizations is part of more than \$1 million donation by Exelon companies nationwide to help communities during pandemic response

By TASHA JAMERSON  
BGE

BALTIMORE, Md. (March 18, 2020)—Today, BGE is joining with Exelon and Constellation to donate \$175,000 to Maryland relief organizations including the United Way of Central Maryland, the Maryland Food Bank, and the Baltimore Community Foundation to support their efforts to provide essential services during the coronavirus

(COVID-19) pandemic. This is part of a more than \$1.15 million donation by Exelon Corporation and its family of companies nationwide to relief organizations to support communities impacted by the spread of the coronavirus.

"BGE is committed to helping our community during this challenging time," said Carim Khouzami, BGE CEO. "These donations and our continued partnerships with the United

Way, the Maryland Food Bank, and the Baltimore Community Foundation are essential in efforts to help our customers address their needs during the COVID-19 health crisis. Getting through this requires everyone to lean in and do their part to lift up our community and help protect its most vulnerable members. We are grateful to

See BGE Page A8