

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

[LIFE](#)

## Work & Family Mailbox

Sue Shellenbarger answers readers' questions

By

**SUE SHELLENBARGER**

June 28, 2016

**Q: Many women in a volunteer group I participate in are at-home mothers who eventually want to return to work. Any advice about using volunteer experience to help you find a job? —P.C.**

A: Volunteer work can help improve skills and expand your job-hunting network, but the best examples have quantifiable results or specific outcomes that reflect skills relevant to your target job.

Avoid giving a laundry list of all your volunteer activities on your resume. Stress skills that are relevant to your target occupation, **says Addie Swartz, chief executive officer of [reachHIRE](#), of Boston, which provides training and resources to women returning to work after career breaks.** If all your volunteer work involves donating professional services, consider presenting them under a single umbrella as freelance or consulting work. An accountant might volunteer as a financial consultant to more than one organization, such as a small business and a PTA, for example. Other volunteer work can demonstrate organizational or project-management skills, such as running a fundraiser, Ms. Swartz says.

If you've identified a target employer, see what charities or fundraisers the company supports and relate your volunteer experiences to that, Ms. Swartz says. "That's a way of showing that you're a good corporate cultural fit," she says. When properly presented, "volunteer work can give an employer a unique window" into your abilities.

While you're out of the workforce, consider keeping a work diary of volunteer projects, tasks completed and results achieved, to make it easier to include specifics and details on your resume. Keep LinkedIn profiles and contacts updated and post volunteer accomplishments as they happen.

**Write to** Sue Shellenbarger at [sue.shellenbarger@wsj.com](mailto:sue.shellenbarger@wsj.com)