

# Volunteer Organization Profile: Hands On Nashville (HON), Nashville, TN

*Volunteering in America 2011*

In the aftermath of the worst flood in recorded history, the city of Nashville saw thousands of residents displaced from their homes and extensive damage to historic landmarks. The disaster eventually claimed several lives in Nashville and Davidson County and caused over \$1.5 billion in damage, dampening the spirit and song of Music City.



But the citizens of Nashville proved that Tennessee deserves to be called the Volunteer State; Hands On Nashville was responsible for activating those volunteers because of the distinctive role the organization plays as a first responder in Nashville's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The agreement between the nonprofit and the mayor's office is the only known one of its kind in the Southeastern region. Staff and volunteers were ultimately responsible for managing more than 25,000 volunteers who offered more than 330,000 hours of flood relief service over the last year.

Kellye Mitchell is one of the many volunteers who make a difference through the work she does with Hands On Nashville. Since 2009, Kellye has contributed by providing up to 40 people with dinner once a week at the West Nashville United Methodist Church and by helping the Friends of the Nashville Public Library raise an average of \$1,800 through its monthly book sale. She was also one of the volunteers who contributed to recovery in the days following the flood disaster.

While serving at a hub for relief volunteers, Kellye ran into Carl, whom she had previously met through the library book sale. In addition to affecting his home, the flood had submerged a portion of his vast collection of books, which he often resold for extra income. Over the next week and with a few other volunteers, Kellye helped her friend clean up his home helping to remove 20,000 damaged novels, stories, and tales. In the end, Kellye was the most affected by the experience because of Carl's gratitude for an act that seemed so simple and intuitive.

"The gratitude of the people I work one-on-one with always humbles and surprises me," said Kellye Mitchell. "Volunteering forces me out of my shell and is my way of making someone's life a little bit better. I enjoy helping other people if I have the time and money. And while I don't always have the money, I always have the time."

Now in its twentieth year, Hands On Nashville has grown to become one of the largest Hands On Network affiliates in the world. Last year, the agency mobilized a total of 199,189 volunteers for more than 2,000 service projects. These volunteers make a difference in the

community every day through a variety of projects that address 25 critical needs, including disaster preparedness and response and hunger and homelessness.

“Hands On Nashville has worked hard connecting volunteers with service opportunities. Our work strengthens the community by providing vital human resources to a variety of causes, allowing them to realize their missions,” said Brian Williams, executive director at Hands On Nashville. “Never were volunteers’ contributions more widespread, tangible, and life-changing than in the wake of the May 2010 flood when volunteers like Kellye Mitchell selflessly gifted their time and talents, helping friends, and strangers alike.”

Hands On Nashville is a Corporation for National and Community Service grantee. Since 2004, Hands On Nashville has recruited and placed 18 AmeriCorps members with an average, year-long retention rate of 89 percent. Of these 18 individuals, four have been hired as full-time Hands On Nashville staff, and three have renewed their AmeriCorps position for a second term.

More information about Hands On Nashville is available at [www.hon.org](http://www.hon.org). You can also follow [@HONashville](https://twitter.com/HONashville) on Twitter or like [Hands On Nashville](https://www.facebook.com/HandsOnNashville) on Facebook.

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