

Ways to Make a Difference

by Carla Canales

for the Mid Coast Forum on Foreign Relations

1. Find Your Cause

Think about where you'd like to contribute your time and energy. Consider what you are most passionate about, or where you have the most experience. Possible areas include:

- Youth engagement / Mentorship
- Environmental issues
- Helping immigrants / first-generation communities
- Contributing toward arts and cultural programming

2. Reach Out to Organizations

Identify the skills you could share — whether you're an administrator, writer, strategist, financial specialist, or anything in between. Then reach out to local organizations working on the causes you care about.

Sample Email Template (Just fill in the blanks before sending)

Dear _____,

My name is _____, and I am interested in volunteering with your organization. I'm passionate about building solutions in our current political and social climate, and I respect the work your organization is doing.

My skills are in _____, _____, and _____. I would love to help in any way I can. While I may not be able to commit to extremely consistent involvement, I want to be engaged and supportive.

Please let me know if _____ (organization name) could use my skills in the coming weeks and months.

With gratitude,

_____ (Your Name)

✳️ **Tip:** Send this to 3–5 organizations in your area. If you don't hear back, follow up — and if still no response, move on to others. Persistence pays off. So many of the organizations out there, particularly non-profits, are desperately seeking in kind help!

3. Organizations to Explore

Below is a list of a few organizations I work closely with, which I believe do very important work and I can personally say that they are worth investing in.

92nd St Y's Share Our America Initiative

Helping people build the foundation for change in their communities by forging unlikely relationships and unlocking trust across differences.

Learn more: <https://www.92ny.org/belfer-center-for-innovation-social-impact/share-our-america>

Check out the Share Our America Community Toolkit they have created, to help facilitate conversations: <https://www.92ny.org/belfer-center-for-innovation-social-impact/share-our-america/community-toolkit>

Harvard University Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

A hub for research, ideas, and leadership development in public policy and civic engagement. I will be more involved with a cultural diplomacy project here in the near future, and we are looking for more ways to expand upon this work at a critical moment for public diplomacy.

Visit the Belfer Center: <https://www.belfercenter.org>

A few other organizations which I work closely with and would recommend:

Boys & Girls Clubs

<https://www.bgca.org/>

Maestra

Maestra provides Support, Visibility, and Community to the women and nonbinary people who make the music in the musical theater industry.

<https://maestramusic.org/>

YoungArts

Founded in 1981, YoungArts identifies exceptional young artists, amplifies their potential, and invests in their lifelong creative freedom.

<https://youngarts.org/>

Listen First Project

We will thrive as a nation because of our ability and willingness to work together across differences. Join the movement of 500+ organizations bringing Americans together across divides to build understanding, trust, relationships, and solutions — to turn down the heat and find a way forward together.

<https://www.listenfirstproject.org/>

✨ Remember: Making a difference doesn't require a huge time commitment — it starts with one step, one email, one conversation!