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## **VETERANS DAY STORY**

### **New Report: Volunteering Eases Return to Civilian Life for Young Veterans**

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**Tisch College, Medford/Somerville, Mass.** - Recent veterans who have volunteered since returning to the United States show a better adjustment to civilian life than their fellow returned servicemen and women who have not volunteered, according to a new report issued in time for Veterans Day.

Released by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), the report, "Volunteering and Civic Engagement among Recent Veterans," analyzes information on veteran volunteering trends from a Civic Enterprises' survey of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, the Census 2008 Current Population Survey Volunteering Supplement, and the Civic Health Index. A copy of the report can be found at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)

The report shows that volunteering helps bolster ties to the community and eases the transition back to civilian life. Fifty-five percent of volunteering veterans say the transition is going well, a full 9 points higher than non-volunteering veterans. Forty-eight percent of volunteering veterans also report that the needs of their family are being met, compared with 38 percent of non-volunteering veterans.

"America's soldiers who dedicate their service to our country often return with strong skills and seek ways to participate more actively in their communities," said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. "Veterans have a lot to give, and getting civically involved can help ease the transition back into civilian life and foster valuable relationships among veterans and community members of all ages."

The most common volunteering activities were fundraising, general labor and the collection and distribution of food for the needy. The data also showed how service abroad influenced their service back home, suggesting veterans are looking for opportunities to use the skills they learned in the military.

Thirty-nine percent of those who have volunteered since their return did not regularly volunteer prior to deployment. Although 61 percent of OIF/OEF veterans strongly agree that American citizens have a basic responsibility to serve the public, the report shows only 25.1 percent of

returned post-2001 soldiers volunteer—a rate slightly lower than that of the general public. Meanwhile, older veterans volunteer at a higher rate and with more intensity than people with no military background, suggesting that established community connections may lead to more opportunities for veterans' involvement.

Despite a lower volunteer rate among recently returned veterans, all generations of veterans were more likely than the general public to have attended a community meeting in the past 12 months, worked on a community project, or collaborated with a neighbor to solve a community problem.

Consistent with the data in previous CIRCLE reports, those with more education also volunteered at higher rates. At the same time, 7 percent more non-white soldiers than white soldiers reported a desire to volunteer during active duty. Similarly, Latino veterans were just as likely as white veterans to become involved in their communities upon returning from duty.

As a whole, veterans weren't as motivated by financial incentives to become civically engaged as was the general public. Property tax reductions were shown to be the most appealing incentives for inspiring veterans to volunteer, followed by non-financial training opportunities.

Overall, recently returned soldiers younger than 30 were much more likely to get involved with their communities if informed of opportunities by a respected fellow veteran, while older veterans wanted to volunteer with their spouses or children.

Veterans' organizations played a potent role in getting returned soldiers civically engaged, as 78 percent of those asked to serve by a veterans' organization have done so. Unfortunately, 74 percent of younger, non-volunteering veterans reported they had never been asked to serve by any organization, and 75.4 percent said they didn't possess information on meaningful civic engagement opportunities.

***CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement)** conducts and promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. A part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, CIRCLE has received funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations.*

***The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service**, a national leader in civic engagement, prepares students from all fields of Tufts University to become engaged public citizens and community leaders.*

***Tufts University**, located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville, and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the University's schools is widely encouraged.*