



President Bush Thanks Volunteers Across the Country During National Volunteer Week and Encourages All Americans to Serve

During National Volunteer Week, April 18-24, President George W. Bush celebrated the millions of Americans who are strengthening communities across the country through volunteer service, and called upon all Americans to answer his [Call to Service](#).

On April 23, President Bush visited Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Florida to promote the importance of volunteer service and to thank all those who serve, including the hundreds of local community volunteers who were in attendance for [the President's remarks](#). The President encouraged more Americans to volunteer by calling "...upon our fellow citizens to serve our country by helping somebody in need. And by doing so, this society will change, one heart and one soul at a time."

Prior to his remarks, the President personally thanked one volunteer and awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award to Neala Hoch, who has volunteered with [Keep America Beautiful](#) for 20 years. The [President's Volunteer Service Award](#) recognizes

Americans who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to volunteer service. The award program is overseen by the [President's Council on Service and Civic Participation](#), established by President Bush to help recognize volunteers and increase awareness of the importance of volunteering.

During his visit to Rookery Bay, President Bush helped a team of [AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps](#) members clear non-native plants. The President thanked the team for their hard work and dedication to service. (Earlier this year, [Congress approved the President's funding request to grow the AmeriCorps program by 50%](#) to 75,000 members this year.)

[In 2003, more than 63 million Americans volunteered in their communities, an increase of 4 million from 2002.](#) As stated by President Bush in his [National Volunteer Week proclamation](#): "Through the dedicated efforts of America's volunteers, we are building a culture of service, responsibility, and compassion, particularly among our young people."

April Highlights

★ Earth Day (April 22) fell during National Volunteer Week this year, and President Bush used the opportunity to promote environmental preservation and service activities. During a visit to the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve in Maine, [the President thanked volunteers for helping to preserve the beauty of America](#) and encouraged Americans to follow their example. Later that day, [President Bush presented the President's Environmental Youth Awards to a group of young volunteers](#) in the White House's East Garden, and thanked them for setting an important example of service.

★ During her [remarks](#) at the Congressional Club First Lady's Luncheon, Mrs. Bush encouraged Americans to support the families of our troops serving overseas through [On the Homefront](#), a joint initiative of the USA Freedom Corps and the Department of Defense. *On the Homefront* promotes volunteer service opportunities for those who wish to support families of military personnel that may need extra help in meeting family and home needs while their loved ones are serving.

★ In celebration of National Volunteer Week, more than 100 volunteers from the White House, AmeriCorps, KaBOOM!, The Home Depot, and the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation joined members of the Anacostia community in Washington D.C. to build a playground for the Children of Mine Center. "Because of the efforts of the volunteers here today, children in this neighborhood will have a safe place to play," said White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, who was one of the volunteers. [Click here for details.](#)



President Bush talks with AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) volunteers at Rookery Bay. White House Photo by Eric Draper.

"I'm a strong believer in AmeriCorps....They're doing good work. These are good kids from around the country who are dedicating time to help America, whether it be teaching kids how to read and write or add and subtract, or out here in the hinterlands of South Florida, protecting the environment."

**President George W. Bush
Naples, Florida, April 23, 2004**