



## Susan R. Madsen: Utah women shine in volunteerism

Utah leads the way in the percentage of residents who regularly volunteer. And women do the most.



(Rick Egan | The Salt Lake Tribune) Ty Bellamy hugs an old friend as she distributes "Gratitude Dinners" to one of the camps, as volunteers from the group Black Lives for Humanity, on 500 West in Salt Lake City, on Thursday, Nov. 25, 2021. The group served to more than 100 people from the unsheltered population, with donations from the community, and many more had food delivered to them by volunteers at camps around the city.

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I am an unflinching advocate for positive change by using research and data to highlight areas where our state can improve in its support of women and girls. (And there are many!) But that does not preclude me from feeling deeply grateful for the many ways in which our state leads the way. With the holiday season upon us, I want to focus on an area where Utahns — particularly the women — outshine most every other state: volunteering. I'm thankful for the [civic engagement](#) among so many wonderful Utah women!

From 2006-2020, [Utah has ranked first](#) in the nation for percentage of residents who regularly volunteer at 51% — a full 20 points higher than the national average. Nationally, women's volunteer rates are six percentage points higher than men's (27.8% vs. 21.8%) and the gap holds for Utah as well.

Not surprisingly, it's Utah's parents who volunteer the most at 63%. While not specified, I am sure that many of the hours given are on behalf of their kids. I love that Utah parents make it a priority to support their children and are willing to work around jobs and other



When it comes to our kids, we show up. I really appreciate that more Utah workplaces are providing flexibility to parents to shift their work hours and location to be able to be there for their children.

The impacts of volunteering are hard to quantify. But we have all seen the cycle that we care for the things we serve and serve the things we care for. Through the years, my husband and I worked with our own kids in local projects to clean up and beautify the communities in which we lived. Sometimes volunteerism with children and youth can start with grumbling, but as we see the different our service can make, we take pride in that work and become more invested. Projects that often start to fulfill mandatory school service hours can become labors of love.

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For me, the time spent singing at the nursing home translated into tender memories for all involved. Being a soccer, basketball, softball, and baseball coach when my kids were young allowed a glimpse in my children's lives that I might otherwise have not seen. I think this is true for so many others as well!

And if you want volunteering [quantified numerically](#), at least 1.15 million Utahns gave 133.9 million volunteer service hours in 2018, the monetary value of which is an estimated \$3.2 billion. Here are a few of the findings:

- 97.8% of residents regularly talk or spend time with friends and family
- 70.4% of residents do favors for neighbors
- 39.6% of residents do something positive for the neighborhood
- 42.0% of residents participate in local groups or organizations

In addition to volunteerism and service, Utah also ranks highest in charitable giving, and that combined with our proclivity for volunteerism recently earned us the [number one](#) spot as the most charitable state.

As I think of what I am thankful for at this time of Thanksgiving, I want to state that I truly do love Utah. I have chosen to make it my home for over 35 years in total. And while I make it my mission to advocate for women and girls in all settings (e.g., education, government, the workforce), it is because the heart of Utah is exceptional, and that when we get it right, we shine.





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**Susan R. Madsen, Ed.D.**, is the inaugural Karen Haight Huntsman Endowed Professor of Leadership & Director, *Utah Women & Leadership Project*, Utah State University.

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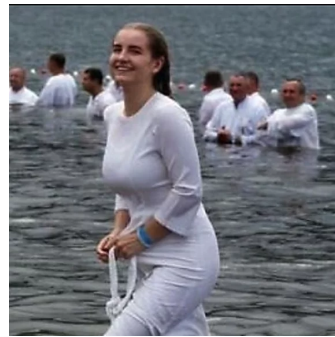


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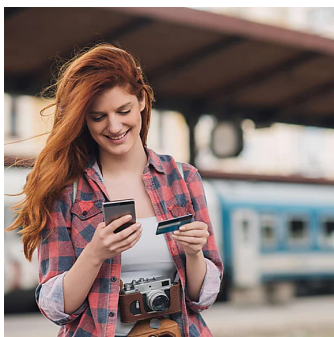


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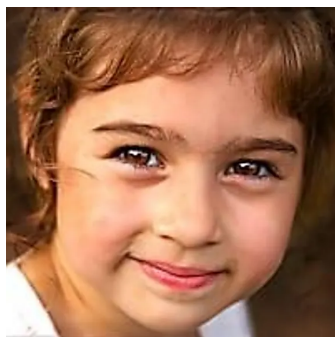
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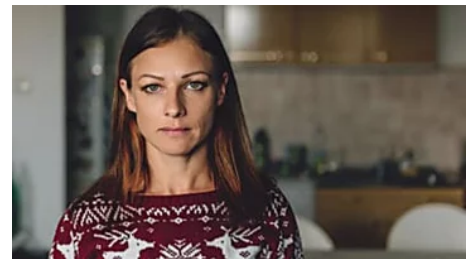
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