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**Corporate Community Relations (CCR)   
CNP Cares™ Guidelines**

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**Corporate Community Relations Department**

**CenterPoint Energy**

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CNP CARES™ GUIDELINES

At CenterPoint Energy (CNP), we have a proud tradition of serving our communities. We strive to be active, engaged partners with the towns and cities we touch through our education, environmental and community outreach initiatives.

The CNP CARES™ program is managed by the Corporate Community Relations (CCR) department, whose goal is for CNP to be viewed as a good corporate citizen that contributes to improving the quality of life in our communities; and to offer and encourage employees, their families and retirees opportunities to participate in a variety of company-sponsored and personal volunteer projects.

To maximize the positive impact of our efforts, CNP CARES™ is designed to focus on priority areas that relate naturally to our business.

This program is intended to reinforce existing volunteer activities and is aimed at encouraging volunteerism in a manner designed to achieve the most meaningful results.

## Strategy_Logo.pngCorporate strategy in action

We work each day to support our communities through volunteer outreach, sustainability, education and economic development efforts. We’re committed to our company strategy: operate, serve and grow.

**OPERATE** – Ensure safe, reliable and environmentally responsible energy delivery businesses, using new and innovative technology to enhance performance by educating our communities and customers on electric and natural gas safety.

**SERVE** – Add value to energy delivery through superior customer service, new technology and innovation. Provide leadership in the communities we serve through good corporate citizenship, strategic partnerships and the company’s financial and volunteer support.

**GROW** – Develop a diverse and highly capable employee base through volunteer opportunities.

## Participation requirements

* CNP’s full-time employees and retirees are eligible to participate in this program.
* To participate in volunteer activities during normal working hours, employees should obtain approval from their immediate supervisor.

## Definition of a volunteer activity

A volunteer activity is defined as work or services performed for a qualified nonprofit organization (NPO).

An NPO, also known as a non-business entity, is an organization that conducts business for the benefit of the general public without shareholders or a profit motive. An NPO is often dedicated to furthering a particular social cause or advocating for a particular point of view.

## Definition of a 501(c)(3)

Commonly referred to as an NPO that is exempt from federal income tax if its activities have the following purposes: charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering amateur sports competition, etc. Please refer to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Publication 557 for more details: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p557.pdf>.

## Eligible organizations/activities

All activities must be performed for a qualified NPO. Qualified nonprofits are certified as tax-exempt 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4) or 501(c)(6) organizations by the IRS. For further clarification, please consult the [IRS website](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p557.pdf).

Note: All activities must be linked to a qualified nonprofit organization. If unsure about an activity, contact [Angela Cox](mailto:Angela.Cox@CenterPointEnergy.com), Manager of Corporate Community Relations.

* **Company-sponsored events**

Events that are planned, organized and managed by the CCR group, such as:

* + Habitat for Humanity
  + March of Dimes Walk and other endorsed events
  + United Way
* **Teambuilding opportunities**
  + Departments/work groups are encouraged to volunteer as a team. Volunteer opportunities can be found at: [CNP Teambuilding Opportunities](http://teams.cnptoday.com/cf/CR/Volunteer%20Program/Team%20Building%20Opportunities.pdf)
* **Personal events/hours**   
  Volunteer hours served outside of normal working hours; personal volunteerism examples include:
* Volunteer fire departments
* School booster clubs
* Mentoring
* Rotary clubs or chambers of commerce
* Veterans groups or organizations
* Coaching youth sports
* Scout troop leader

## Non-eligible organizations/activities

* Travel/drive time to and from a volunteer event
* Attending events for which the company pays for a sponsorship, such as galas, luncheons, banquets or golf tournaments
* Attending general information sessions, such as “lunch and learns” in which no service is performed
* Attending youth sporting events or parent-teacher conference
* Baby-sitting or boarding animals
* Purchasing tickets, making donations or writing checks   
  Note: Donations listed above include: financial, clothing, shoes, furniture, etc.
* Faith-based activities connected with worship services and ministry
  + *These activities serve a limited group of people, and do not contribute to the general public welfare.*

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| --- | --- |
| **Faith-based Volunteerism Activities** | |
| **Eligible** | **Non-Eligible** |
| Food pantry | Singing in the choir |
| Outreach events that benefit the community at large | Teaching or overseeing religion lessons/bible study |
| After-school programs | Ushering |
| Clothing closet | Daycare during services |
| Homeless shelter | Making financial contributions |
| External church grounds keeping and community beautification | Committee service (with exceptions) |

**Under NO circumstances should company-sponsored volunteer events, activities or donations be associated with:**

* Activities that benefit a single individual or private foundations
* Organizations that discriminate based on age, disability, religion, ethnic origin, gender or sexual orientation
* Groups with litigious or divisive public agendas or advertising or cause-related marketing projects
* Agencies or organizations that donate to or support ineligible agencies or organizations
* Organizations presenting a conflict of interest for employees or the company, or may involve a controversial public issue
  + A conflict of interest occurs when your private interests interfere — or appear to interfere — with the best interests of CNP. A conflict of interest may also arise when your personal interests negatively impact your business judgment or job performance. Conflicts of interest can cause serious problems and damage our reputation. We avoid conflicts of interest, or even the appearance of them, to maintain our objectivity and show our commitment to fairness and integrity.

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## Volunteer hours validation

* CNP CARES™ program administration operates on a calendar year (Jan. 1-Dec. 31).
* If a company-sponsored event is held during regular business hours, the employee should obtain approval from his or her supervisor to participate.
* Employees will not receive overtime for volunteer hours.
* The maximum number of volunteer hours allowed per day/per employee is 15.
* Blood donations count as one volunteer hour, while platelets and plasma donations count for two hours.
* Volunteer hours are not awarded for financial contributions to campaigns, such as United Way.
* The maximum number of volunteer hours to be rewarded by *Energized by You* is 400 per year.
* Team captains or coordinators may receive up to 20 volunteer hours per campaign with approval from the program manager.

## Safety commitment

Your safety is our primary concern. Employees are expected to comply with the company’s [safety standards and policies](https://cnptoday.com/OurCompany/SafetyForward/Pages/Home.aspx) when volunteering at company-sponsored events. Below are some examples of what you can do to be safe:

* THINK before you do your work or task.
* When uncertain about how to do a task or operate a tool, ASK a CCR program manager.
* Always concentrate on the task at hand.
* Make sure you are properly prepared, trained for and physically fit to perform the task at hand.
* Know where the first‐aid kit is located and how to get emergency help.

If you witness unsafe behavior, please inform the program manager or team lead immediately.

## Volunteer appreciation and recognition

***Energized by You***

* One hour of volunteer time is equal to 10 points
* *Energized by You* points do not expire
* Family and friends volunteer hours do not apply to your *Energized By You* points
* Quarterly deadlines for entering volunteer hours are as follows:
  + Q1 – March 31, 2018
  + Q2 – June 30, 2018
  + Q3 – Sept. 30, 2018
  + Q4 – Jan. 4, 2019
* To access your points balance, please click [here.](https://www.appreciatehub.com/centerpointenergy1)

## Board service

CNP encourages employee participation in professional, civic and public affairs activities that benefit the employee, the company and the community. However, employees cannot accept an appointment to membership on the board of directors, committee or similar body of any outside company or professional organization without the approval of the business/functional unit leader. Please contact [Diane Englet](mailto:Diane.Englet@CenterPointEnergy.com) prior to accepting an appointment to membership on the board of directors, committee or similar body or any outside company or professional organization. If you currently serve on an NPO board, please add the organization to your profile on CNP CARES™.

In addition, employees are not permitted to pursue any public office or governmental agency position unless prior specific written or electronic approval is obtained from the vice president of the employee’s reporting structure. An appointment to a position in a religious, charitable, professional or civic organization does not necessarily require approval unless duties interfere or conflict with the employee's position and work responsibilities or unless the organization is likely to take a position contrary to that of CNP. For more information, see the [Standards of Conduct/Business Ethics Policy](https://cnptoday.com/Shared%20Documents/Standards_of_Conduct_Business_Ethics_Policy.pdf).

# VOLUNTEER PROVISIONS

## Volunteer dress code

All volunteers should maintain a high standard of personal appearance, and attire should reflect the requirements of the volunteer activity and working conditions. The volunteer coordinator will discuss any specific policies for each facility or event. For example, hard hats and safety glasses are part of the dress code for any home repair projects. CNP volunteer T-shirts are required at most events.

## Volunteer services

Volunteers may perform professional services only when they are certified or licensed for the service.

## Volunteer conduct

CNP provides a work environment in which safety, integrity, accountability, initiative and respect – for customers, the community and each other – are the guiding principles that govern employee behavior. The company expects each employee, at all levels of the organization, to always perform his or her job in an ethical, professional and businesslike manner, and in compliance with the law. For more information, see the [Standards of Conduct/Business Ethics Policy](https://cnptoday.com/Shared%20Documents/Standards_of_Conduct_Business_Ethics_Policy.pdf).

## Volunteer expectations

It is your responsibility to report to the volunteer event you registered for as scheduled. Please arrive on time, as absenteeism or tardiness may cause a burden on other team members. If you have a problem or question, be sure to notify your onsite volunteer captain or group leader. Safety is our first priority, so please be prepared and aware of your surroundings at all times.

Certain volunteer events have minimum age requirements. The CCR program manager leading the project will share specific details on event postings.

Following the activity, remember to record your volunteer hours. Any exceptions will be communicated.

A volunteer should not receive goods, services or benefits in return for volunteer services.

## Liability/Waiver

CCR asks that all volunteers read and complete a waiver and release form when volunteering at a company-sponsored event.

## Non-discrimination guideline

We strive to maintain a culture where all employees are free from illegal discrimination. We follow federal, state and local labor and employment laws. We are committed to fair and effective human resources policies and practices, including: recruiting, hiring, training, career development, performance evaluation, compensation, promotions and terminations. Everyone in our workplace has the right to be treated with respect without regard to race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, color, religion, creed, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, citizenship, marital status, veteran status or inclusion in any other legally protected status.

All employees are expected to comply with company’s Business Ethics and Compliance standards and policies when volunteering at company-sponsored events or representing the company as a volunteer. For more information, see the [Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy](https://cnptoday.com/Shared%20Documents/Equal_Employment_Opportunity_Policy.pdf).

## Media inquiries/Social media

* Any media inquiries or interview requests, either verbal or written, should be directed to the Corporate Communications department. Only authorized media relations spokespeople can represent CNP to the public. For more information, see the [Standards of Conduct/Business Ethics Policy](https://cnptoday.com/Shared%20Documents/Standards_of_Conduct_Business_Ethics_Policy.pdf).
* Adhere to social media etiquette. Volunteers are encouraged to like and follow events on CNP’s social media channels, including Facebook (www.facebook.com/CenterPointEnergy) and Twitter (@EnergyInsights). When posting, be sure to define your association with the event or identify yourself as a company volunteer. During your volunteer shift, we ask that you focus on your role and discourage you from posting to social media accounts. Volunteers are prohibited from posting sensitive event information on social media.
* In partnership with Corporate Communications, the program manager will share and publicize local events and results internally through newsletters, bulletin boards and monthly reports.

# PROGRAMS

## Grant Incentives for Volunteer Employees (GIVE) Grants

The GIVE program recognizes, supports and encourages employee and retiree volunteer efforts. The program awards grants to qualified nonprofit organizations based on volunteer involvement, with a requirement of forty or more volunteer hours.One grant is allowed per employee/retiree in a calendar year. To access eligibility information and the application, please click [here](https://cnptoday.com/Shared%20Documents/GIVE%20grant%20application.pdf).

* Grant eligibility amounts are: $300 for employees, $500 for employee board members and $200 for retirees.

## Exceptions

Situations will arise that cannot be effectively addressed within the constraints of these guidelines. There will be times when business processes take precedence. CCR reserves the right to change, amend, modify, or suspend any part of these guidelines. The exception review process will log all findings.