

Giving Back Joy Spurlock

Loves challenge of helping clients with tax problems

When people volunteer, they can change lives — including their own. Each week in Reason, we will highlight a volunteer's story of giving back and how that selfless act was a true revelation. The volunteer project is a collaboration among the Times-Union, the University of North Florida, the United Way of Northeast Florida and HandsOn Jacksonville.

By Nancy Winckler-Zuniga
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Joy Spurlock's day moves at a mile a minute through the needs of her family, her work and her school commitments — aimed straight ahead at the target she has set for herself. Giving back to the community is part and parcel of that objective.

"If I set a goal, I just have to do it," Spurlock said. "I have a need to be challenged."

That competitive sense has served her well within the world of corporate management, where there are high expectations for staff to demonstrate leadership skills whenever and where ever possible. Spurlock has helped to organize volunteers to help with various projects including "Stuff the Bus" efforts at the beginning of the school year. She is a 16-year participant in the Gate River Run and has taken part in the Donna Deagan Run to support breast cancer research.

Nine years ago, the drive to do more brought her to volunteer as tax preparer for United Way's RealSense initiative.

"Having been involved in the mortgage side of banking, I felt drawn to the tax side of RealSense," Spurlock said. She loves the challenge of helping



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CHANGE A LIFE — AND YOURS

If you would like to volunteer for the United Way's RealSense program like Joy Spurlock, you can register and file an application form at realsensejax.org, or call (904) 390-3282. Here are some other opportunities:

- Make a difference by volunteering at Daniel, which helps community children and their families, at fund-raising activities, organizing game days or mentoring a child. Contact Daniel at volunteer@danielkids.org or call (904) 296-1055, extension 1007.
- Help children with autism at the home-based social skills program, Son-Rise, of the ASD Climber Foundation. It is a parent-led program that focuses on building a connection with the autistic child by using his or her motivations to encourage growth. Fill out a volunteer form by clicking on the Services tab at <http://www.asdclimber.org>.
- Check out many more opportunities at www.handsonejacksonville.org and www.uwnefl.org.

clients solve their tax issues, often surprising herself at how satisfying the end result can be.

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That includes the camaraderie of fellow volunteers.

"The volunteer group family, it's like a homecoming, or family reunion," she said. Each spring as the volunteers gather together for their IRS training and put in a marathon of hours during tax season, they come together and mentor each other — pushing and encouraging making sure that they give the best representation.

"One of my most memorable clients I assisted was

going through a tough time personally and due to her circumstances was going to end up paying a substantial amount in taxes," said Spurlock.

She said that by sharing options and information they were able to save the woman hundreds of dollars.

Spurlock said that the leadership and teamwork that comes together out of the volunteer team is different than what she encounters in the workplace. That kind of mentoring and growing together through her RealSense volunteer work helps to keep her going in her everyday work environment.

"You have to have tolerance; you have to understand others to be a manager," Spurlock said.