

Fort Collins ranks fourth in nation for volunteering

Study shows we like to help

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Fort Collins-Loveland residents are showing a true heart for service, according to a report released by Volunteering in America.

This year's report ranked the cities fourth out of 75 mid-sized cities for volunteering, up from seventh last year, with an average of 97,000 residents volunteering from 2006 to 2009. Fort Collins and Loveland exceeded the average in multiple areas including financial service giving.

Adam Molzer, United Way of Larimer County's volunteer center director, said it has been a blessing to watch the volunteer force become more prevalent in Larimer County.

"It's very exciting to receive this national recognition and to see Larimer County's placement in the national rankings increase from the past," Molzer said. "It really does tell the story of the culture of service that resonates here in Northern Colorado. We're thrilled. It does speak volumes about who we are as a community."

Molzer said he attributes the ranking to national and local efforts to make service a part of daily life. As one who works with volunteers every day, Molzer said those who volunteer share a desire to improve the community and address the issues facing the area.

"There's a mindfulness that exists in our community that we really can do more together, and that leads to people coming forward to invest their time and their talents," Molzer said. "I think there's significant momentum in our community in terms of willingness and a desire to commit to causes that people are passionate about."

While Molzer said he would love to see Fort Collins at the top of the list, he said a greater goal is to see residents simply meeting the needs of the community, regardless of rank.

"It's really our goal to continue to meet the needs of this community and to address those by supporting and facilitating volunteer involvement however we can," Molzer said. Jane Snyder, volunteer coordinator at Ten Thousand Villages, a local nonprofit store in Old Town Square, said Fort Collins residents have an aptitude for meeting those needs, particularly in the "simple ways" like lending a helping hand to a neighbor.

"There are countless hours that are never considered volunteerism, like helping your neighbor mow their lawn or taking care of their cat when they're out of town," Snyder said. "That's all

volunteerism too. ... It makes it such a beautiful place to be when people know their neighbors and help each other."

Snyder said that volunteering gives her the ability to pursue other interests outside of her career, adding variety and perspective to her life. "Volunteering lets me practice some of my other passions," she said.

"The more we learn and experience as human beings, the better human beings we are," Snyder said.
