

What Counts for Volunteer Hours?

Charitable benevolent activities of fraternal benefit societies are considered not-for-profit by revenue tax services due in large part to approximately \$2 billion value to communities across Canada and USA.

A presentation to Washington by Sons of Norway and other Fraternal Benefit Societies in 2011 showed 80 million volunteer community hours in a year as well as \$533 million for annual program support. It is very important that Sons of Norway continues to collect the volunteer hours and community program support information to maintain tax-free status for our Lodges, Districts and International office.

- Please see the International Sons of Norway website [forms page](#) for the most recent “Individual Hour Tracking” and “Secretary Hour Tracking” forms. You will have to use your Sons of Norway login to access the forms.

What Qualifies as Community Support and Volunteer Activities?

Community Support/Volunteer activities have the primary goal of serving people outside of Sons of Norway. There are two general criteria that have to be met for an activity to qualify:

1) The lodge has to arrange for participation in a volunteer/community service event. (Hint: the volunteer activity likely appears on the lodge calendar and/or is listed in the lodge newsletter as a community service opportunity).

The lodge can organize the volunteer activity, partner with another group for a project or provide “workers” for a volunteer project sponsored by or coordinated by another group; the key is that participation is arranged by the lodge.

An example of a Community Support Event/Volunteer Activity organized by the lodge would be when the lodge “adopts” a stretch of highway and members pick up trash for two hours. Another example would be to arrange for a group of members to participate in a Habitat for Humanity building project, where they are part of the work crew.

2) A Community Service activity usually involves two or more members.

For example, shoveling an elderly neighbor’s driveway is a kind act, but not something that would count as a lodge volunteer activity. However, if the lodge organizes a group of members to go together to shovel sidewalks and driveways for the elderly, then that would be an event or activity that should be counted as Sons of Norway Community Service. Or, a group of members, organized through the lodge, participates in a community-wide service project to assist elderly and disabled citizens by doing a day of shoveling.

There are some situations where members, under the Sons of Norway umbrella, do their volunteer work as individuals. For instance, cutting stamps for Tubfrim can be done by members in their home, after which the stamps are given to the lodge for shipment. Cutting stamps is considered volunteer time. Cutting fabric at home so that lodge members can make quilts for the homeless is another example.

Adopt A School is another example of individual or group involvement under the Sons of Norway umbrella. The lodge can coordinate with a school to provide volunteer workers to help with any number

of activities, such as tutoring, assisting in classrooms and the lunchroom, monitoring recess time, helping out in the teachers' workroom, working at a carnival, listening to students read, etc. Or the lodge may put on an event, such as a cultural day. All of this would fall under the Adopt A School program and would be considered Community Service activities.

What isn't considered Sons of Norway Community Service/Volunteer Activities?

Member participation that is not coordinated/arranged through the lodge is not considered Sons of Norway Community Service/Volunteer activities.

For example, if a member volunteers to deliver meals because he/she feel it is a worthwhile activity or they sign up through their church, even if they make mention that they belong to Sons of Norway, the time is not considered a lodge volunteer activity. However, if the lodge arranges for a group of volunteers to provide drivers for a week of deliveries, those hours would be counted.

Turning Individual Involvement into Community Service for the Lodge

If your lodge is looking for opportunities to get involved in your community, start by asking your members for ideas. Where are they currently volunteering? What volunteer activities do they enjoy doing? Are they aware of any local organizations that are looking for volunteer groups to partner with for a community service project?

Tapping into your members' current volunteer interests and involvement to build a calendar of community service activities is a great way to get buy-in, increase participation and create excitement.