

Webhead: UT should update its Volunteer Hub and better advertise it to students
Columnist Ava Garderet urges UT to increase communication with nonprofits and better advocate their service opportunities for students to volunteer around the community.

With over [5,000 nonprofits](#) in the Austin metro area, a large student body, and its unique location, UT has the opportunity to make lasting positive contributions to the surrounding community.

UT knows this. Through UT's Center for community engagement, the [Volunteer Hub](#) includes a variety of volunteer opportunities. However, it is not well advertised to students or nonprofits and is not up to date with new organizational service opportunities.

UT should improve its communication with both students and local nonprofits to expand the student body's involvement in the community and make Volunteer Hub a truly effective resource.

Christina Jones, [New Leaf](#) Volunteer Coordinator explained that their only contact with UT comes when a large student group plans to volunteer on the farm, which only happens a couple of times each season.

Jones explained that while New Leaf appreciates this group work, the organization can only take a few groups each month.

"Because really, that's also work. If you have a group of 10 folks, you have to work to get them acclimated and get them all going in the right direction," Jones said. "I think it would be really beneficial to have a couple of UT students commit to working a full season."

UT could update the volunteer hub with new information from organizations, such as New Leaf, so that UT students' service is more consistent, and ultimately more impactful. Additionally, opportunities like these long term service commitments have the potential to become internship-learning experiences that could fulfill the requirements that many students must meet for their majors.

David Woodruff, Kitchen Leader and Board Member of [Open Door Ministry](#), expressed his curiosity to how individual volunteers find them.

"I didn't know anything about a UT volunteer hub," Woodruff said, "But there are a lot of students who might not be aware of Open Door, so a connection with Volunteer UT could help them become aware of this particular opportunity that's just off campus."

UT should improve its communication with non-profits by sending out monthly surveys to non-profits like Open Door and New Leaf to gauge their current needs and understand how students can best contribute to their efforts.

There should also be more communication between UT and students who are passionate about volunteering.

Ben Beal, a Plan II sophomore, has been part of H2O since his first year at UT. Beal described how he has never heard of UT's Volunteer Hub, and wishes that it was better advertised.

"I'm not even sure where I could find it if I were to go look for it," Beal said.

Beal suggested that UT could make the Volunteer Hub accessible on the one thing that every student interacts with on a daily basis: Canvas. The hub could be available as a module that appears on the home page of each student's Canvas, so that they are reminded to check new volunteering opportunities.

Despite multiple interview requests, the University was not available for comment on this issue.

Many students, including Beal, are passionate about serving their community, and wish that they were aware of the different opportunities available around Austin.

"What starts here changes the world," Beal said "and we could change the world a lot more if (volunteer opportunities) were advertised a bit more clearly."

Garderet is a Plan II and Urban Studies sophomore from Dallas, Texas.