

## EDITORIALS

## At the top

*County is first in volunteerism,  
but don't mention the roads*

Everybody loves lists.

In the paper on any given day you'll find the bestselling books, the most popular movies, the top-ranked college football teams. Magazines list the richest people, the best colleges, the best (and worst) places to live. On TV, David Letterman has his nightly Top 10. Stuck to the fridge at home — well, let's not get distracted by that list of unfinished chores. It's not so popular anyway.

Sonoma County recently turned up on two lists.

One of them wasn't very complimentary. You might even say it highlighted one of those unfinished chores. TRIP, a national transportation research

group, said the Santa Rosa metropolitan area has the second-worst roads in the nation among communities with 250,000-500,000 residents. Citing federal highway data for 2008, the group said 54 percent of local roads are in poor condition. No doubt, each of us has a personal list of the potholes we'd like to see filled first.

By the way, who is at the top of the list? Antioch, in Contra Costa County. They can have it.

The other list is worth cheering about. Sonoma

County ranked first in a volunteerism survey of 16 communities around the state, with approximately 40 percent of local adults donating time to schools, food banks and other philanthropic causes.

The national average was 27 percent.

Altogether, local residents volunteered a combined 19.9 million hours during each of the past three years, according to a survey conducted by the Corporation for National & Community Service, a government agency that promotes and coordinates volunteerism. Researchers put the value of that time at \$414.8 million year.

"What we're seeing in Sonoma County is community spirit and generosity at its best," Eunice Valentine, the executive director of the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County, wrote in a Close to Home column that will appear in Sunday's paper. Valentine notes that local residents are bucking historical trends by donating even more of their time during the present economic downturn.

It's only fitting to end this with a list, so here are three places dedicated to volunteerism:

1. The Volunteer Center matches people with non-profit groups and sponsors programs including Volunteer Wheels and the Literacy Connection. Call 573-3399 or go to [volunteernow.org](http://volunteernow.org).

2. The Press Democrat's Good Deeds blog lists a variety of volunteer opportunities at [gooddeeds.blogs](http://gooddeeds.blogs).

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