

AFS JANUS

Newsletter for AFS Alumni & Friends | May 2025



AFS Volunteers Lead a Community of Global Citizens

AFS started as a volunteer-powered organization, shaped by the AFS Volunteer Ambulance Drivers in the two World Wars. Today, AFS volunteers are shaping the future, as global changemakers, cultural connectors, and passionate educators who foster understanding between people from different backgrounds. Each of the 50+ AFS offices worldwide couldn't imagine their programs without the 30,000+ volunteers who drive our work by:

- *Supporting exchange students, host families and schools to create bridges between communities and countries*
- *Leading workshops and educational activities to empower young people with global skills and perspectives*
- *Developing their own personal and professional skills, and building connections that last a lifetime*
- *Creating impact to foster peace, understanding, and cooperation in an increasingly divided world.*

95% of AFS volunteers say that they find their activities meaningful, demonstrating how our volunteer opportunities allow people to develop as active global citizens.

A Snapshot of AFS Volunteers

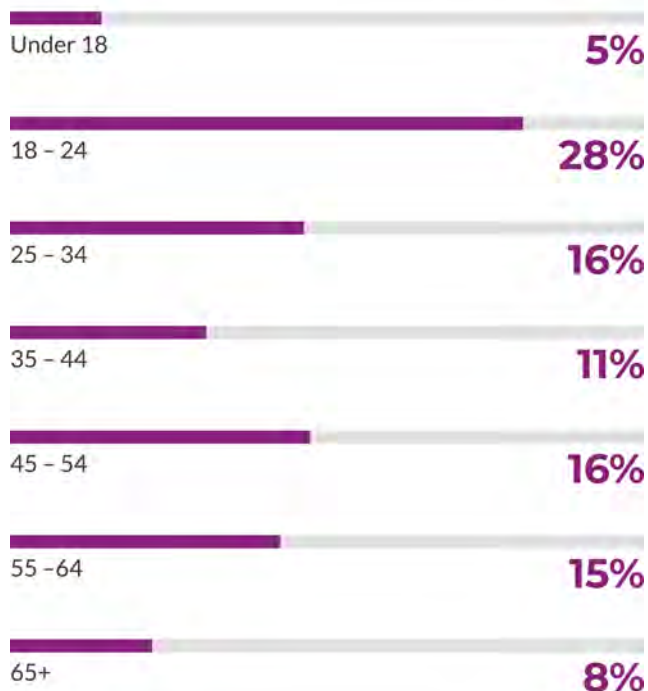
This data comes from our bi-annual Volunteer Survey and Evaluation (VSE) which included over 4,500 responses, making it one of the biggest surveys of its kind in a non-profit globally. The survey also found that:

- 90% of responding AFS volunteers say that the main motivating factor for people to volunteer with AFS are the relationships and community they develop as they volunteer.
- 43% of AFS volunteers are aged 18-34.
- 30% of our volunteers have been volunteering for over 10 years.



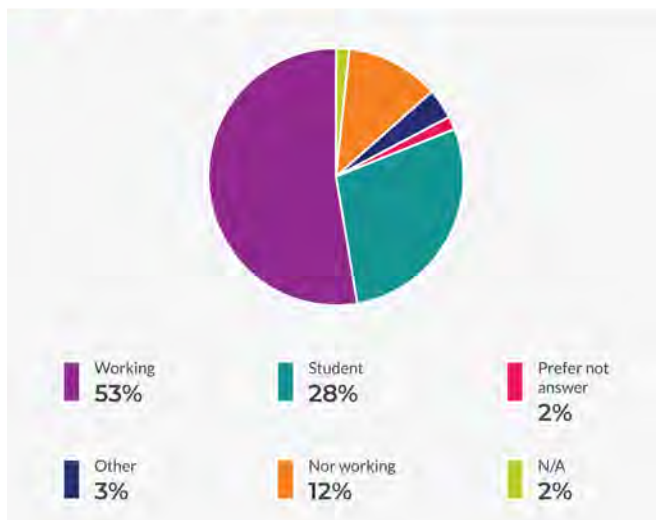
From the AFS Archives: AFS Volunteers learning Italian in 1944.

How old are AFS volunteers?*

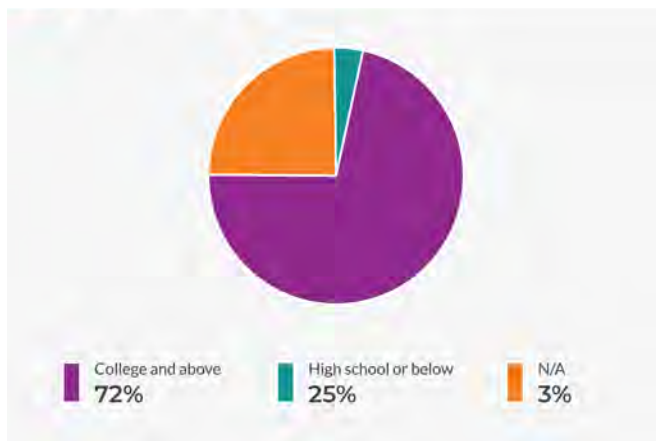


* 1% of the respondents didn't reply to this question

What is the employment status of AFS Volunteers?



What is the current level of education of AFS volunteers?



How long have they been volunteering with AFS?*

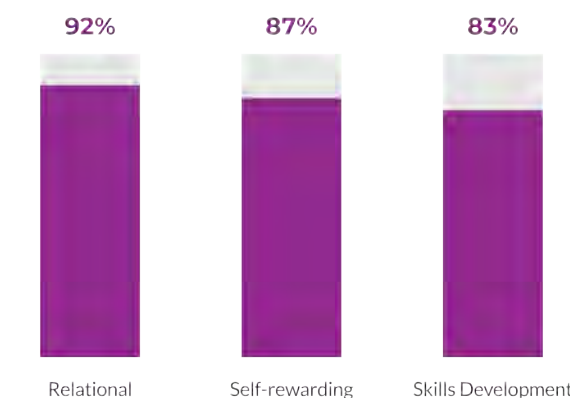


* 1% of the respondents didn't reply to this question

How much time is dedicated to volunteering with AFS?



WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER WITH AFS?



Relational

Creating an environment where volunteers can share successes and challenges with each other, and grow as a team.



Self-rewarding

Frequently receiving recognition for the work volunteers do, in a variety of ways



Skills Development

Having the opportunity to learn and apply new skills



From the AFS Archives: AFS Volunteer Ambulance Drivers at the AFS Headquarters in Paris in 1916. The photo features our founders, Stephen Galatti and A. Piatt Andrew.

How It All Began?

The first AFS volunteers were young men who drove ambulances in the two World Wars. Most of these young people were enrolled in universities at the time and felt compelled to serve with the AFS mission. By the end of WWII, 2,196 AFS volunteers served in parts of France, North Africa, the Middle East, Italy, Germany, India, and Burma, carrying more than 700,000 casualties. The day-to-day experiences of these drivers are documented, often in great detail, in original letters, journals, photo albums, newspaper clippings, field notes, and bulletins now cared for by the AFS Archives.

After the wars, AFS transformed into a secondary school student exchange organization. In 1947-48, the new American Field Service International Scholarships (AFSIS) program brought its first students to the United States, a total of 50 students from 10 countries. AFS' ability to effectively recruit, organize, and communicate during wartime translated nicely into the post-war era, and the organization's network grew rapidly in the 1970s to expand the AFS mission internationally. Today, we have more than 30,000 volunteers who serve the AFS mission.



AFS Argentina & Uruguay 2018 Volunteer Assembly.



AFS volunteers support exchange students throughout their experiences.

AFS Archives: Preserving the Memory of Volunteers



From the AFS Archives: AFS Volunteer Florence Norton with AFS President Bill Dyal.

The AFS Archives host several collections that speak to the day-to-day activities of dedicated volunteers, including those individuals who founded or led local chapters. For example, Florence (Flossie) Norton volunteered as a host mother in the late 1950s and early 1960s before becoming a district representative in charge of six AFS-participating schools in Western New York. Flossie interviewed and supported host families, American students traveling abroad, and students who came to study within the U.S.

As AFS continued to expand to new countries, Flossie, who was an International Trustee at the time, was instrumental in the founding of AFS-USA, separate from the international administration of the now global network. She would become President of AFS Western New York, was elected to AFS' International Board, and devoted a great deal of time to AFS' Teachers Program.

Other volunteer collections in the AFS Archives recall creative methods of fundraising. John E. (Jack) Brennan was involved with several AFS Chapters in California. In January 2021 he donated several regional items, including coins from the San Bernardino Chapter Coin Project. The coin project was created to raise funds for scholarships to send American students abroad in the 1970s. The Barstow Chapter, represented by the 1991 t-shirt in his donation, was equally as strong. They hosted an international weekend every year, to which they invited exchange students from all over Southern California.



From the AFS Archives: Coins from the San Bernardino Chapter Coin Project, 1970s. Donated by AFS volunteer John E. (Jack) Brennan in 2021.

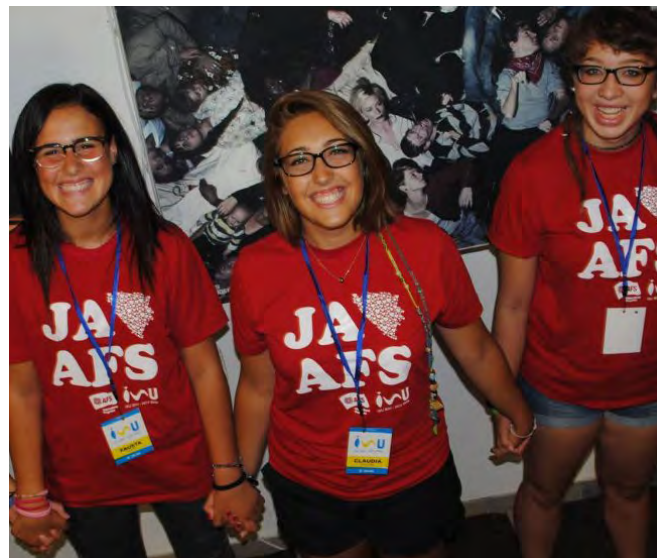


From the AFS Archives: Arrival of the first 17 AFS volunteers at the Gare de Lyon, Paris, April 4, 1940.

Join Our Community

Driven by the mission to foster greater intercultural understanding, AFS volunteers have built an impressive global AFS community of more than 1 million people committed to creating a more just and peaceful world.

Join us by contacting AFS in the country where you live or find out more at afs.org/volunteer.



AFS volunteers are true Active Global Citizens today.

The Ford Family: A Multi-Generational Commitment to AFS



From the AFS Archives: David K. Ford's jeep with lilacs given to the AFS volunteers by French people along the road as they passed. The 567 Coy convoy was on the "Goldflake Convoy Route" from Marseille to Northern France, April 1945. From left to right: Walter De La Plante, John Harmon, and Carl Zeigler.

David K. Ford was a lifelong AFS volunteer: from his service as an Ambulance Driver in World War II, to overseeing local AFS chapter activities in Ohio, to opening his home and serving as a host family to an AFS exchange student. His passing in December 2024 inspired us to reflect on and celebrate his tremendous contributions, as well as to connect with his daughter, Susan Ford, who has also been a committed AFS volunteer.

David K. Ford was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1925. He joined the American Field Service (AFS) in 1943 at the age of 18 to serve in World War II. His trajectory as a volunteer during World War II took him from Northern Africa, through various regions of Italy, eventually to aid in the evacuation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. David served with distinction, driving 12,000 miles and transporting 450 casualties, until June 1945. As his daughter Susan Ford recalled over the phone in March 2025, her father was a great fit for AFS because he was a bit of a mechanical genius, someone who was able to easily take things apart and put them back together again.



David K. Ford.



David K. Ford and ambulance, Lake Trasimeno, Italy (Repro), 1944.



David Ford with 567 ambulances along the Rhone, April 1945.

David remained involved with AFS following the war. At the request of Stephen Galatti, AFS Director General, he greeted participants of AFS' first bus trip in 1948, was in charge of the Cuyahoga County AFS chapter in Ohio for many years, and acted as a host parent. As a teenager, his daughter Susan enjoyed meeting AFS students, was interested in hosting, and her father encouraged the idea. In 1977, the family welcomed Rikke Danielsen from Tønsberg, Norway. From the time Rikke walked off the bus, she integrated into the family seamlessly, and Susan, having grown up with two older brothers, gained a sister. As teens they traveled together, Susan has visited Rikke in Norway numerous times, and the two have attended high school reunions together. The fact that the family connection has endured throughout the years is a true testament to the strength of AFS' programs.



Susan Ford and her AFS host sister Rikke Wataker during the Midsommar celebration in 2017.

AFS programs clearly had an impact on Susan much like her father because later, during the fall of 1983, Susan became a field assistant for an AFS region that included her home state of Ohio. Before moving into teaching and education, she supported volunteers and chapters, and worked with school administrators in the Pacific Northwest area.

In the 2011 AFS Janus article, David Ford shared what he would tell young people considering participating in an AFS program today: *I would quote my AFS daughter Rikke Danielsen from Tønsberg, Norway when she said:*

“ AFS makes a huge difference in your life. It helps you develop an immense amount of self-confidence and has a huge impact on the positive development of your future life. ”

We thank Susan Ford for her family's commitment to AFS and her willingness to find a permanent home in the AFS Archives for the notes, maps, letters, reports, and photographs that her father, David Ford kept in his collection over the decades.

Are you a descendant of an AFS Ambulance Driver?
We would love to be in touch with you!
Please reach out to Paul Gamner via email at paul.gamner@afs.org.

Celebrating Outstanding AFS Volunteers

The AFS volunteer community is the main force that drives our mission and impact around the world. Every International Volunteer Day, AFS volunteers gather at a virtual meet-up to celebrate the most outstanding members of our community, and the AFS spirit: the one that gives them a sense of family and belonging, humility and selflessness, and the ability to help others grow and expand impact.

Find out more at afs.org/volunteer/awards.

The 2024 AFS Volunteer Awards recipients are:

AFS Galatti Award

Established in 1983, the AFS Galatti Award honors AFS volunteers whose longtime commitment, dedication and exceptional journey with the organization have advanced the AFS mission and created an impact:



Dina María Cajas
AFS Colombia



Katalin Tóthné Tímár
AFS Hungary



Roberto Casarejos Espinoza
AFS Chile

Peggy and Art Howe Award

Established in 2016, the Peggy and Art Howe Award honors the outstanding service of AFS volunteer families:



Carol, John, Matthew Baldo
AFS-USA



Thomas, Carla, Clemens, Theres Merker
AFS Denmark

Young AFS Volunteer Award

Established in 2015, the Young AFS Volunteer Award for Outstanding Service recognizes AFS volunteers under the age of 30 whose exceptional contributions to the organization have made a difference in advancing the mission and goals of AFS:



Anushka Anbhule
AFS India

AFS Community Impact Award

Our newest award, established in 2023, the AFS Community Impact Award for Standout Local Chapters recognizes the exceptional efforts AFS Local Chapters do every day to further the AFS Mission:



Tokyo Tama
AFS Japan



Neuquén
AFS Argentina & Uruguay

AFS WWII Ambulance Drivers Last Post



Shirley W. Hendryx, Jr.
(1923-2023) (IB 5)



Lucien Lee Kinsolving
(1921-2024) (CM 41)



James B. Watson
(1920-2023) (ME 1)

Find out more about AFS Ambulance Drivers at afs.org/lastpost



5 Hanover Square, Suite 1402,
New York, NY 10004

Contribute to the Volunteer Ambulance Impact Fund



AFS Paraguay Volunteer
Assembly 2019.

Donating to the AFS Volunteer Ambulance Drivers Impact Fund in honor or memory of a beloved Driver ensures that AFS remains strong and vital as a volunteer organization. Your gifts will be applied where the funds are needed most, such as supporting volunteerism in AFS and helping AFS achieve our goals to develop global citizens.

Donate now at [afs.org/donate](https://www.afs.org/donate) or send your contribution via check to 5 Hanover Square, Suite 1402, New York, NY 10004, USA.

If you would like to remember AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc. in your will or trust, you may include that in your official documents. Please don't hesitate to contact us for more information at m.miladinovic@afs.org.

Some photographs are courtesy of the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs (AFS Archives) and cannot be reproduced outside the guidelines of United States Fair Use (17 U.S.C., Section 107) without advance permission from the AFS Archives.