

Letters Against Depression: Forming a Social Club

Who are we?

Letters Against Depression is a completely free service offering hope and support to people battling depression and other mental illnesses, via letter writing format. LAD serves the entire globe- we have written to over 70 different countries! We serve all ages 13+, and people of all religions, ethnicities, genders, incomes, etc. We love to love, and support everyone. Letters Against Depression depends on its awesome volunteers - that is how our letter writing service can be completely free of charge for everyone looking to utilize our services to supplement their mental health. LAD is always looking for volunteers to help expand our growing public charity organization. We are receiving more letter-recipient sign ups daily, and appreciate the help to send our support to people who need it! Anyone can sign up to write or receive a letter!

Letters Against Depression recognizes the hardships of facing depression and other mental health illnesses, and believes no one deserves to face difficulty alone. Isolation and loneliness can further depression and mental issues; we want to erase stigma around mental illnesses, and share compassion, hope, and support.

Our mission:

Letters Against Depression's mission is to provide hope and support to people battling depression and other mental illnesses all over the world, through our free handwritten letters. We want to share the message that "you are not alone" and that "you matter".

History

LAD was founded by Robert Mason as he was experiencing his own depressive episode. Robert would write letters to himself in his journal as a way to help heal from his battles with mental illness. He went to Facebook, reaching out to ask if any others felt anything similar to what he was facing with his depression, with the promise to write them a letter. Letters Against Depression has since sent thousands of free letters to help those in need of support, with global reach and universal accessibility. LAD officially began in 2014; and as of 2023, we have sent over 45,000 pieces of free mail to those battling depression, with an appreciated group of over 6,876 volunteers giving their time, love, and effort to those who are needing it.

Letters Against Depression has had multiple **partnerships:**

Cornell University

University of Michigan

Gateway Health Care

JP Morgan Chase

Ally Bank

Disney

Anthem

Advent Health

US Bank
Pepsi
Jewish United Fund
Wellth
The Hartford
Neshaminy High School

You can volunteer with Letters Against Depression on your own, or in a group setting. It would be incredibly easy to set up within a club environment, for everyone to contribute to the mental health community in a social setting, which has numerous benefits. Not only are you helping spread hope and support to those experiencing depression or other mental issues, but you are bettering yourself. It is incredibly easy to receive documented hours of your time contributed to Letters Against Depression, and you and your group can volunteer from anywhere, and on a time schedule that works for you.

Letters Against Depression has volunteers from over 130 different countries, and we write to over 70 countries. We have a virtual base, and therefore are excited to encourage global participation. You can do it anywhere- classrooms, libraries, outside. As long as there are materials to create personal messages for those who need it, then anyone can volunteer for LAD and our cause anywhere, and anytime. LAD does not have a time commitment. You choose to write to who you want, when you want. This works wonderfully for group settings, as any chosen meeting schedule would coincide with LAD's schedule.

WEBSITE: lettersagainst.org

VOLUNTEER PORTAL: <https://lettersagainst.knack.com/lad#volunteer-portal/>

Contact

Founder/ Ceo: Robert Mason

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Jen Mason

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Secretary: Debra

Debra@lettersagainst.org

Fundraising Chair: Doreen

Doreen@lettersagainst.org

Fundraising@lettersagainst.org

Innovation Council Chair: Kim

Kim@lettersagainst.org

LADinnovationcomm@gmail.com

Admin Assistant: Megan

Logging Volunteer Time

Letters Against Depression will happily log and credit volunteer hours for academic or professional reasonings, i.e. resumes and applications. We are a nonprofit, 501c3 charity organization, which means that we can happily back up the hours that you contribute to writing letters and making hugs. By volunteering with Letters Against Depression, you are benefiting the mental health community.

Volunteer hours will be rewarded depending on length, content, difficulty, personalization, etc. of each letter and hug. Content is reviewed before being sent out, and time may be awarded as so: for a one page letter one might be given 30 minutes to 1 hour of recorded service time, while 2 pages would be 1-2 hours. Extra time may be given for letters or hugs that took more time and effort. Doodles, stickers, stamps, and any other creative touches would be awarded more time, for example. A top quality letter, including creative touches, could get you as much as 4 hours of volunteer time for your personal, academic, or professional recordings.

Volunteers will know their given service times immediately and cumulatively. Emails will be sent out after each submission with feedback and the allotted number of hours given. These can be reviewed at any time because we want to give you the hours you deserve for your hard work! All requests for official documentation to show hour fulfillment should be sent to Robert@lettersagainst.org, and will then be sent out on Letters Against Depression letterhead.

For your volunteer hour confirmation with our official letterhead, please allow us advanced notice as confirmation may take several business days to receive.

Ways to Volunteer

Writing a Letter

Our volunteers hand write personal letters of hope and support to individuals around the globe facing depression and other mental health issues. As mentioned, we remain unbiased in our work, and there is the opportunity to write letters to all different types of people experiencing a wide range of things. Volunteers will be able to utilize our Letters Against Depression volunteer portal, where letter recipients submit a short story and facts about themselves.

Initial letters are for recipients who have not received a letter from us here at LAD. A first letter must be at least two pages in length (college ruled paper type size), while at least one page is

required for recipients who have received previous letters. Messages must be upbeat, positive, and deliver our messages of hope and support. Use the recipient's story to help you connect and find what you should write, and how you can best show the person that they are important, they are not alone, and they matter. Feel free to introduce yourself, and talk about your personal experiences with anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc. If you would like to possibly receive a letter back, you may put down your email or return address as well.

When claiming a letter on our virtual volunteer portal, we require that you finish and mail the letter within 2 weeks of the claim. If the letter is not received, then the claimed recipient may not receive their anticipated letter for a longer stretch of time. We don't want anyone missing out, especially when they are in need of support!

Making Hugs

When writing a letter, you may also choose to create a Hug, that can fit into your mailed envelope for your chosen recipient. Hugs are homemade artwork, and are meant to additionally boost the spirits of our recipients. Who doesn't love an encouraging piece of art? We like to send a hug with every letter, when possible.

Hugs can vary as long as they can fit in to a standard sized business envelope, with the written letter. Below are some examples of hugs that you can create!

- Index card art
 - Typical 3x5 index cards may be decorated with positive quotes and images. Index cards may be drawn, traced, stamped, stickered, etc.!
 - Examples:
- Full page artwork
 - You may choose to create a full page of positive quotes and images, if preferred over an index card. You can use the entire page to send hopeful messages! Paper must be lightweight, and must be able to be folded into the envelope. We prefer colors; images may be drawn, traced, stamped, stickered, etc.!
- Crocheted items
 - We appreciate a wide range of skills here! Crochet work is highly encouraged, if it fits into the envelope along with the letter! A crocheted hug is a unique and beautiful keepsake. Some examples of crocheted items include hearts, stars, or anything else that is creative. Adding loops to the items so that our recipients can tie them onto something is also great! It is wonderful to carry around a reminder of hope.
- Book marks

- Book marks are an awesome hug to make, especially if your recipient mentions they enjoy reading in their given information. Creative bookmarks are perfect for readers! It may have positive and hopeful designs. Bookmarks are creative and functional!
- Birthday/ Celebration cards
 - Birthday or celebration cards may be homemade or store bought, but should be personalized for the recipient. Cards should be sent ahead of time so that the recipient may receive it in time. We hope to receive cards three weeks prior to the birthday/ celebratory month's beginning. It can be a negative experience to receive a celebratory card late, so it is important to be on time!
- Stamp donations
 - Donated stamps may be documented under hugs. We always need stamps, and then some more stamps! Stamps can even be bought at usps.com and shipped directly to us, for max convenience! We love stamps with hearts, flowers, or anything cute and uplifting! Have fun choosing your designs. Any donations will count for volunteer time, and money spent on donated stamps can be used as a tax write off.
- Decorating envelopes
 - Our standard sized envelopes are the first thing our recipients will see! We want to share your creativity! A powerful or pleasing design may have a great impact on others. Use of color and design will ensure our recipients continue to receive unique designs. You can even create and mail multiple envelopes to us. We send about 800 FREE letters a month, and it would be wonderful if every letter was paired with a decorated, encouraging envelope. Since we mail so many letters, you may repeat the same design as it is unlikely that one person will receive a repeat design. The money spent to donate envelopes may be used as a tax write off.
 - Tips for decorating envelopes:
 - Be careful to not cover any areas the post office may need to stamp, scan, or mark! Try to steer clear of the upper right corner (stamp area), as well as the bottom of the front side and the area where we put the recipient's information.
- Other examples of hugs:
 - Crafted jewelry! Beaded or braided necklaces, bracelets, etc. are great hugs. It is wonderful to know that people may be carrying around something that you made to brighten their day!
 - Pop up origami! Any origami that can be laid flat in the envelope, is a wonderful additive to a letter.
 - Keychains!
 - Stickers!

The time you put into your hugs shows our recipients that we care! We are wanting to put our time, effort, and love into providing hope and support to our recipients. Our hugs are our extra bit of love and support. If you are considering making hugs, please prioritize letter writing as well! We can not send our abundance of hugs if we do not have enough letters to pair them with. Our recipients sign up for letters; hugs are our added bonus. We need just as many letters as we do hugs!

Granted volunteer hours for hugs may vary based on material, time, and effort placed into the hug.

Social media is an important part of Letters Against Depression. As a nonprofit, it is important to continue to share our message, and show what we do. You can claim an extra 15 minutes of volunteer time if you take a picture of your hug and send it to LADinnovationcomm@gmail.com, or if you post your hug on social media and tag us (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok, and LinkedIn)! If you complete both, you may get a full hour of volunteer time!

Attached are example forms that may be utilized in assistance to starting a Letters Against Depression club in your school, library, general community, etc.!

Letters Against Depression New Club/ Activity Proposal

PERSON PRESENTING PROPOSAL:

Name: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number (optional): _____

NAME OF PROPOSED SUPERVISOR: _____

EMAIL: _____

NAME OF PROPOSED CLUB/ACTIVITY: Letters Against Depression

TYPE OF CLUB: Academic, mental health advocacy, recreation, arts/media

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PURPOSE OF PROPOSED CLUB/ ACTIVITY: Letters Against Depression is a FREE mental health supplement; who offers free, accessible, inclusive handwritten letters from our volunteers, to assist in the chosen mission of spreading hope and support to those affected by depression, loneliness, and other mental health issues.

GOALS OF PROPOSED CLUB/ ACTIVITY:

1. To continue to spread awareness about the nonprofit, Letters Against Depression, while advocating engagement in spreading hope and support to our recipients.
2. To claim recipients and write personalized letters continue to support LAD's mission statement of spreading hope to those experiencing mental health issues.
3. To support the mental health community.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES/ EVENTS:

1. Stamp/ envelope donation drive
2. Stamp/ envelope bake sale fundraiser/ collection
3. Regular letter writing and hug making
4. Creation of social media content for Letters Against Depression
5. _____
6. _____

What type of area/ facilities do the students need to meet in (classroom, gym, etc.)?

When and how often do you intend to meet (frequency, time, day of week)?

IMPACT: To support the mental health community, and encourage participation in spreading hope, support, and love. To be an all inclusive, safe space.

