

When Parker Harnett started looking for volunteer opportunities two years ago, she ran into trouble finding an organization that fit her interests and time requirements.

“It was kind of overwhelming to search through the abyss of the internet,” said Harnett, 16.

She wondered if other young people were running into the same problem trying to find ways to give back to their communities.

So with the help of her father, Kendall Harnett, the Yarmouth High School junior and a classmate, Zoe Siegel, launched a website, [howtohelpinmaine.org](http://howtohelpinmaine.org), last November to connect teens with volunteer opportunities around the state.

“Basically, our mission is to connect students to organizations that need help the most and show how important it is to volunteer in Maine,” Harnett said.

One year later, the girls say they’ve gotten positive feedback and are hoping to grow the number of organizations involved and young people who use it as a resource. About 40 nonprofits and charities are currently listed on the site.

The pair have also found their own volunteer opportunities: Siegel started a creative writing program for kids at the Boys & Girls Club at Sagamore Village in Portland, and Harnett volunteers at the Midcoast Humane Society.

They estimate they’ve put about 400 hours into the website and still meet weekly to work on it, despite their already full schedules.

Both are in the school play this fall. Siegel swims year-round and Harnett plays soccer and is in the school district band.

“We spend a lot of time on it, but it’s also fun, and I think it has some cool aspects that make it helpful,” said Siegel, 16. “To me it’s very worth it.”

Like Harnett, Siegel said she was looking for more ways to give back after returning from a service trip to Costa Rica the summer before her freshman year.

She said it was hard to find things that fit with her extracurricular schedule and that sometimes age requirements for volunteering were a barrier.

The site features ways to donate either time, money or “stuff,” and has an option to search for opportunities based on areas of the state. It also lists age requirements for volunteers.

The goal is to help organizations connect with students, but anyone can use it.

“Something we want to do is put as many organizations as we can in one place with age requirements (for volunteering) and things they need specifically,” Harnett said. “We think students are an underutilized resource in Maine.”

They also launched an Instagram account in connection with the site and are hoping to develop an app to make it more accessible.

Over the summer, they received a \$3,000 donation from Martin’s Point Health Care that they are using to create two \$1,500 scholarships to be awarded this spring to students who have followed their interests through volunteering and community work.

“We really just want to create a student database where we can have as many students as possible (involved),” Harnett said. “We want to create a student army of volunteers.”