



Why Students Should Volunteer: How Helping Others Can Help You

"It is better to give than to receive."

You've likely heard that sentiment at one point or another in life. And if you're a parent, chances are you've had to teach that on several occasions. Though it may be a cliché, that's only because there's truth to it — in more ways than you might think.

While the feeling of giving back is something that can bring joy to our lives, for an active student it can often be seen as nothing more than an extracurricular activity. Something to do *if* there's time.

But as many of us know, time doesn't just magically appear on our schedules, especially if you're a working student and a parent on top of that. That means it would have to be made a priority. Perhaps not as important work or childcare for example, but something worth considering as a key part of your schedule alongside other priorities such as parenting and being a student.

When you take into consideration what employers look for in candidates beyond an education, you might find that volunteering is also desired.

Volunteering as a pathway to employment

As you study for your career field and inch closer toward graduation, you might be thinking about how you can construct your resume in a way that looks appealing to employers. Beyond what you've learned in school, there are intangible qualities that could set you apart from other candidates.

Anita Kinsler, who works for the City of Ocala in staff development and training management, said that volunteering can highlight these qualities.

"Employers are putting more emphasis on job seekers with volunteer work," Kinsler said. "This shows a commitment to community and that the person is willing to go the extra mile ... it demonstrates empathy and the ability to work well with others."

Kinsler goes on to recommend candidates highlight their volunteer work on their resume and/or job application in the same way they would for a former employer with the name of company, months/years of service, supervisor name, job duties, etc.

You'll often hear the term "soft skills" or "essential employability skills" as it relates to becoming a well-rounded job candidate. As a student, you learn these skills throughout your courses. Being able to utilize these skills on a regular basis through volunteer work can display to employers that you are willing to lend a helping hand.

The value of volunteering

If you thought volunteering has no dollar value, think again. The estimated [value of volunteer time](#) in 2021 is \$28.54 per hour, which demonstrates the significant contributions volunteers make to their communities, and accounts for billions of dollars to the United States through their time, talent, and effort.

Additionally, a [2018 study on volunteerism and health](#) found that participants experienced an 8.5% increase in mental health, and a 4.3% decrease in depression after volunteering regularly. The same study found that participants experienced a 9% increase in physical health.

This is important to remember when volunteering. Just because your bank account isn't affected by the time you put in, doesn't mean that time isn't valuable.

When you're helping others, you can help yourself emotionally and physically, all while potentially increasing your chances of employment, meaning the payoff can be worth the time.

How to volunteer

If you're interested in giving your time back to the community for reasons above, or for something else, you can contact your local Chamber of Commerce to obtain a list of volunteer organizations, or ask others who may be volunteering.

However, if you're unsure when it comes to choosing the *right* organization or cause to volunteer for, try making a list of things that make you feel fulfilled such as helping kids with their schoolwork or assisting the elderly. Then, analyze that list to determine what interests you the most.

Remember, though you may benefit from volunteering in a variety of ways, don't lose sight of what's at the core of volunteering: giving. Understanding that you may or may not get something in return is key before making the decision to volunteer anywhere. You might even get something unexpected in return: a new purpose, friendship, or a feeling of value for making a contribution to your community

Anita Kinsler is quick to remind us all why volunteering is important.

"It's an opportunity to bring hope and support in a way that says, 'everyone needs somebody to show them love.'"