Hicksville Congress of Teachers Commitment to Community Service Scholarship

How Community Service impacts My Personal Growth

by Brian Eichenauer

I have been participating in community service projects since I was in elementary school. I began by volunteering in my church food pantry. Community service, i believe, has improved my life. Working in the food pantry stocking shelves and helping clients has helped me understand the reason for giving to improve the community around me and to have a better feeling about myself and the people who I am helping. Helping people in need or less fortunate than I makes me feel good inside. I hope to continue helping out as much as I can, even though i plan to go away to college. However, when I am back in town I will make time to stop in and help.

My church has a junior and senior high youth group of which I am part. Every year we visit nursing homes and the veteran's hospital numerous times. We play bingo with the residents, make crafts and just talk with them. I have learned a lot of things from just talking and spending time visiting with them. They are full of wonderful stories about the past and listening to them is more exciting than any history lesson they teach at school because they were there, they lived through it. It's a good feeling when I come back and they remember my name and ask me how I am doing.

I also work with a foundation called Smile in a Bag. We put small toys, coloring books, play dough, crayons, and other kid-friendly stuff into bags and hand them out in hospital emergency rooms and pediatric wards. The items in the bag help the kids stay calm and keep them busy and distracted while receiving the treatment they need. I like working with Smile in a Bag because I get to personally deliver these bags and see the smiles and relief it brings to not only the kids but their parents as well.

I am part of the robotics team and in that club they teach gracious professionalism. Gracious professionalism, in a few words, means feeling proud about your work but always understanding that improvements can be made at any given time. My community service has improved my understanding of this major aspect in engineering in several ways. The first way is that it has taught me to stay humble about what I do on a daily basis. By being able to stay humble, I can be assured that I won't feel aggravated over small things while trying to improve my outreach.

I feel that community service keeps me grounded, knowing that at any time I can be in a similar situation to the people I help. Knowing that I am bringing joy and smiles to other people is more than enough thanks for me. I hope to continue helping out locally whenever I can, and to find other opportunities to help when I am away at school.

Volunteering at a young age has helped me to grow as a person. I understand how important it is to help others when needed and not ask for anything in return. These people don't take things for granted, as some of us more fortunate people do at times. They are always very grateful for everything that I have and not expect things to just be handed to me. Volunteering my time has been a wonderful experience for me. At first, I thought it would be boring but that is not the case at all. The things I have learned and experienced have made me a more rounded, grounded person. These life lessons could never have been learned exclusively in a classroom setting.