



Dollars for Doers

Thousands of individuals donate their time, expertise and energy to *FIRST* Chesapeake every year. During 2019-20, before COVID-19 forced the early end to the competition season, *FIRST* Chesapeake volunteers were on track to exceed the number of volunteer hours ever reported in a single year in the 20+ years of operations—over 35,000 donated hours by 1500+ volunteers. That's a pretty amazing statistic.

Now, what if we told you that your volunteer hours can be translated directly into money for your team and for *FIRST* Chesapeake? It's true.

Many companies encourage employee volunteerism. Volunteer service can help to build professional skills, and employee engagement in public service demonstrates an employer's commitment to the community in which it operates. As an added benefit of employment, many companies will reward volunteer service by making a matching cash gift to nonprofit organizations for which employees commit their time and expertise.

We caught up with Michael Davidson recently to talk about Dollars for Doers and to hear from him just how easy it is to turn volunteer hours into a cash donation of up to \$1,000 in any given year. Michael works for Anthem in Richmond, Virginia, a company that participates in the Dollars for Doers Program, and Michael is both a mentor for Blue Cheese, FRC 1086 and a regular *FIRST* Chesapeake event volunteer. Through the Dollars for Doers Program, Anthem will donate up to \$500 for every 50 hours of volunteer service Michael contributes to a single organization in a calendar year (\$200 is awarded for 20-49 hours of service). That means each year, Michael's volunteer service translates into a \$500 donation for *FIRST* Chesapeake, and an additional \$500 donation to the team he mentors. As a committed volunteer for the past ten years, that adds up to huge sum of money, almost \$5,000 in charitable gifts to *FIRST* Chesapeake alone.

Michael explained to us that the process he goes through each year is pretty simple. His company uses Benevity, a charitable gifts platform used by many large companies. Near the end of each calendar year, Michael visits the online portal through Anthem's Benevity account and fills out a request form. He reports the number of hours he volunteered during the calendar year and the name of a contact person at the nonprofit organization that can verify his volunteerism. Once he clicks submit, his employer processes a \$500 donation to the nonprofit organization of his choice.

Most companies manage their Dollars for Doers Program through their human resources office because it is a benefit of employment. You can find out through your own human resources office whether or not your company participates in Dollars for Doers and what the process is to apply.

With a long history of using Dollars for Doers for both the team he mentors and *FIRST* Chesapeake, Michael gave us some useful advice:

- Dollars for Doers is restricted to a single calendar year of service and is a “use it or lose it” benefit—you must claim your Dollars for Doers matching donations before the close of the calendar year in which you donated your volunteer service;
- It’s a good idea to keep track of the volunteer hours you donate through your personal calendar so you can easily add up the hours at the end of the year when submitting your Dollars for Doers form;
- Many large companies use a platform like Benevity to process gifts, but your human resources office can tell you what process they use and it is usually pretty simple;
- If you want to use your Dollars for Doers benefit for a team you mentor, the matching cash gift must go to a registered 501 c 3 nonprofit organization—if your team is not registered as a 501 c 3, it is possible to process the gift through a Parent-Teacher Association or other nonprofit that can accept the donation on behalf of the team; and
- Your travel time to and from volunteer service counts as part of your volunteer time—don’t forget to factor in travel time as you track your volunteer hours.

Dollars for Doers is an easy way to turn your hours of volunteer service into a matching gift for FIRST Chesapeake or a team you mentor. Visit this [link](#) and enter the name of your employer to find out if your company participates in a volunteer matching gift program. If you have questions, reach out to Sarah Gagnon at sgagnon@firstchesapeake.org.

