

When I was in grade school I always saw volunteering as something that looked good on a resume but didn't really think of the benefits that it offered to me or anybody else involved. As I began to get more involved in programs such as LEAP!, in high school, I started to see how much fun people were having and how many great people were volunteering. I started to get a little more involved in my high school by joining my student council, but my school did not have many programs or events that appealed to my interests. When I came to Memorial, I decided I would go back to LEAP! and back to what first got me to pursue volunteer opportunities. I felt that the program helped to shape me into who I am and I wanted the opportunity to help others to go that.

LEAP! led to other volunteer experiences that really started to grow in my second year. I got involved in almost any of the programs I heard about. I also began to get more involved off-campus by captaining a team in the Relay for Life, and applying to volunteer at the Health Sciences Center. Now, into my third year, I've been involved in every LEAP! program offered since my own, in both winter and fall orientations, in Make Midterm Matter, in two Leadership Forums, in two Relays, and of course at the Student Volunteer Bureau. Every year I find new and exciting things to be a part of or I try to take a larger role in the things that I have already been involved in. My interest just keeps growing.

Volunteering is one of the most important things I do; it is just something that I always want to do; it is something that, no matter how busy I get, I will always make time for. There are, of course, many benefits I receive from my volunteering such as gaining experience, knowledge, confidence, and making friends to name only a few, and there are just as many things I strive to put back into it. It is a way that I can show my love for my university, my community, my support for charities and a way unite against the problems of the world. But why do I volunteer? I've been asked that question many times and I never know how to answer. My best answer is that everything in my life leads me to volunteer. The things I like make me want to get involved to enjoy them more, the things I detest make me want to get involved to change them, the things I do not know much about or understand make me want to get involved to learn about them. But whether it's spending my time picking up trash, watching a box of t-shirts, running errands for someone, or doing my part to make the world a better place; with and for the right people I can get anything done and enjoy it. I may play a very small part or a very important part, but I feel privileged just to be able to play a part. Any impact I leave, no matter how small it may seem, is an impact none-the-less. Volunteering is not just a part of my life. Volunteering is my life.

Silver Essay

For years I have been giving my time to different communities that I have been involved in to try to give back what they have given to me. I remember realizing what volunteering was all the way back in elementary school. Different mothers of the children in the school would come in for Home & School to make sure all of the children were in attendance that were supposed to be. I used to wonder why these mothers would take these couple of hours out of their day to do this, and not even get paid. Now I completely understand. If they didn't do this then really, who would? The teachers don't have time and the principal has other things on their mind. These mothers are there to make sure the children are safe when other parents can't. This is exactly what volunteering should be.

My goal when volunteering is trying to make another individual have a slightly better day, or even a moment by giving my time and skills to them. For example during the summer every week I would go to a nursing home and take a cart full of nail polish and creams and ask the elderly ladies if they would like a manicure. To them this wasn't just a manicure, a lot of these women did not have much human interaction other than with the nurses, and this is what is important. Sometimes I would just be taking off the spotless job from last week and just doing it the same again. The fact that I am sitting there with them, hearing about their day or their life is the important part to this other human being. I could see their eyes light up when they saw me coming down the hall, and that right there was what kept me coming back to the awful smelling place every week.

Another opportunity I am currently involved in is volunteering at the Health science. Every Friday I go up to the case room and ask the doctors and nurses in the unit if there is anything they would like me to do. I usually end up transporting baby cots from floor to floor and putting together mommy or baby charts in the office. I believe that these seemingly meaningless things will make a big difference in the lives of the highly skilled doctors and nurses who could be bringing life into the world instead of worrying about putting together the information charts. The time I spend doing these things is time that they don't have to.

In the next couple of months I am travelling to Bangalore, India where I will be volunteering at an orphanage and a hospital to not only teach young children with deprived lives new skills but also learning new skills and about a new culture myself. This is an adventure I am very excited about and hope to get as much out of it myself and I give to the children and doctors I will be working

with.

Every action has a consequence. Volunteering is an action that always has a positive consequence. Whether it is brightening someone's day by being a friend or lightening the work load of an overworked nurse, there is always a happy ending. I hope that the time and effort I continue to put in for the community will make an impact somehow and I hope to continue with it for all of my life in some way or another as it really is what makes a community. No one should go through their life alone and without help.

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted"

-- Aesop