



SERVICE TO HUMANITY

SMALL WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE Getting Youths Involved in Volunteering

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Rev. Fr. Stephen A Privett, S. J. President of the University of San Francisco, speaking of volunteering said, "stepping out of one's 'comfort zone,' to experience first hand the glaring inequities and rampant injustices of our world has the power to change our perspectives and priorities. A former student told me that his experience in Guatemala taught him that if all the people in the world were stretched out in a single file line, he would be up toward the very front of the line. He has decided that rather than spend the rest of his life pushing to be the very first in line, he would try to look back at the billions of people behind him. That decision, he said, has made all the difference."

Service to humanity makes you realize how important everyone is in this world. Everyone on this planet needs



clean water to drink, every child needs to attend school, every woman needs protection from violence and the world needs clean air to breathe.

So, whatever you do to help reduce poverty or illiteracy or save the environment in your community or town has a profound effect on the global community as a whole. Service within your own community highlights your own importance in your community.

This may be small, but it will make you proud of being a vital member of the community. The more you get involved in making the world a better place to live, the more important you become in your own school or community.

You have to believe in what you do. If you think by serving others you are helping them, then you will stick with it and you will not quit. The best part of serving others is knowing that you are making other people feel good. You will gain so much out of seeing a small child smile because you did something for them rather than watching television or sitting at home. Each time you visit a village school and read a book to a child, showing that you care, especially to a poor farmer's child who cannot afford to buy a book; it brings about a smile and a happy look in their eyes.

Tips for Parents, Teachers and Youth

My advice to all young people is to appreciate all that you have at home, and that will propel you to help someone else. Very often, our friends at the school or in the community ask what kind of volunteer work they should get involved or what kind of service their child could do. The best answer is based on what you like or what is your real passion. If you like to read books, then you can volunteer as regular readers to small children at the local library. Or collect used children books and send them to shelters for homeless children or schools in third world countries. If you like painting or performance arts, then you can organize concerts or plays with the help of your fellow students to raise funds for certain charities. You can get a group of friends and their parents to help build a house with Habitat for Humanity. It is a matter of what you enjoy doing in life, and then acting on it to serve humanity.

Service to our fellow human beings is a wonderful way to build passion, confidence, initiative and leadership among young adults. Getting young people active in helping others begins by developing an awareness of the issues affecting humanity today. The main task of the parents, guardians and teachers is to educate the children from a very young age and show them how helping others and helping the society in general make the world a better place to live for everyone.



1. Talk to your children: Everyday set aside some times after dinner or on weekends or holidays to discuss an issue you read in the newspaper, or issues in the community or the town you live in. Talk to them about the concerns or problem and discuss ways your child can help solve the issue. This can be a very small issue, like a child in the community is not attending school for various reasons, such as lack of money, health issues or being bullied. The issue can be anywhere in the world. But, remember, build passion for the issue.

2. Encourage your children: Always encourage your children and guide them to use their creativity to come up with solutions on how they can help to reduce the problem. Your children have many talents and brainstorming ideas with them on how they can utilize those talents to solve some of the community problems will help them. Develop an initial idea or a plan to help a certain project, such as sending sports equipment to a village in Udorn or Nongkhai in the Northeastern part of Thailand. Zambia (kids do not have proper equipment to play and as a result end up in getting into trouble with the law).

3. Get the Word Out: Help your children organize discussions among their friends. They can create or participate in online and offline discussion groups. Make your house available for discussion groups among their friends. Make flyers about the issue and identify specifically what kind of help you need and distribute to your friends, family members and other people in the community.

4. A Realistic Plan, but Think Big: Help your child develop a plan that is realistic and can be achieved. Help them identify the limitations and the strengths and the weaknesses of that plan. Help them set up a timeline to implement the activities in the plan. Their idea of service to mankind must be big without any limitations, but help them to be realistic in terms of implementing certain projects.

5. Get the School Involved: Encourage your child to start a school club. Start by recruiting friends with common interests and find a faculty advisor to be the mentor for the project. Talk to the



principal and request to host a student meeting to talk about the issues. Ask your principal to announce the project and encourage interested persons to contact you.

6. Organize a Public Meeting in a Community Center or in your own Company: I am sure you many parents are active members of a local club or a social club in a company. Bring your child along with you to one of the meetings and discuss the issue, exchange ideas on how these issues affect your community or the society you live in, and figure out ways to work together.

7. Implementation: Help your child bring the ideas to life. Sometimes parents play an active role in the implementation, but encourage your child to play an important role. Show your support and encouragement. Keep a photographic record of all the steps taken to implement the project.

I urge all parents and students to look for volunteer opportunities suitable for children and parents to work together. We have experienced this in our own family. When a family works together as a team in a non-profit organization, or plans and implements a community project within their own community or abroad, the experience can bring them closer together. It also presents the opportunity to teach your children the value of serving humanity and gives the entire family a shared experience and a wonderful memory. The time we spend as a family helping in villages in the remote areas in India or attending to the street children near the community garbage dump in Cambodia create many warm memories that will always stay fresh in our minds.