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Service: The Essence of Life

What is the essence of life? To some, it is to make money and be successful. To others, it is to love and grow. And for many, it is to be selfless and put the needs of others before one's own. This is a central theme in community service. Service is a vital part of ensuring communities function properly, as it benefits populations that may be underserved or need assistance. In turn, people are strengthened, resilience is forged, and empathy is learned. However, the value of community service is sometimes overlooked and seen more as a burden than an opportunity.

When I was a freshman, this was my view. I neglected to do service toward others and viewed the work as a task, as if it were merely an assignment that needed to be completed. Because of this, I ended up finishing the majority of my service hours within a few weeks at the end of the school year, and I didn't consider any positive implications that came from my work. It wasn't until my junior year that I truly realized how incredible community service is. I finally understood that many community needs rely on service work that stems from the compassion of others, and nonprofits are unable to succeed in their missions and goals without the aid of volunteers. I realized that participating in community service positively influences more than just the recipient of the service: it bolsters the volunteer as well.

From food banks and shelter work to tutoring students and cleaning up trash, community service comes in a variety of meaningful forms. Though these have extremely positive effects on

the community, they also benefit the volunteers who actively participate in the service. Involving oneself in the community helps to build social, leadership, and collaborative skills as well as independence. Consequently, self-confidence improves, and relationships and connections are formed. Many service opportunities involve physical activity, which in turn helps to maintain strength and health while combating depression. Furthermore, in a study conducted by the London School of Economics, it was found that volunteering weekly improves happiness by 16% (Western Connecticut State University). This highlights how community service is beneficial to everyone involved, and why it is so important that we are called and inspired to help others – and, in doing so, ourselves.

The inspiration to participate in community service differs for every person. For some, they serve their communities as a way to give thanks for the service they received. For others, they want to make a positive difference. For me, I participate in community service to help others while gaining experience in my current career path, which is Environmental Engineering. As someone who loves nature and wishes to protect the environment, I go on Russian River cleanups to help preserve the natural world. As someone interested in engineering, I assist in teaching an engineering program at a Boys and Girls Club. Community service provides opportunities to gain experience and learn job skills that pertain to different careers or goals, even increasing the chances of gaining employment by 27% (VolunteerHub).

Though important, the individual advantages that accompany community service are minuscule when compared to the wider benefits of volunteer work. Community service has the power to transform communities by permanently bettering the lives of the members within. People on the receiving end of service experience an increase in their quality of life, resulting in a more harmonious and thriving community. Volunteering has the ability to raise awareness

about important issues, not just in a community but beyond it as well, which brings people together. When people of all backgrounds are united under a common goal, their potential to create change is limitless. Because of volunteer work, people are capable of making global impacts and influencing the entirety of humanity.

The essence of life is to uplift those in need, which is done through participating in community service. This action is extremely beneficial, not only for others, both locally and globally, but for the volunteer as well. Service work opens the door to career experience and job opportunities while improving personal skills and physical and mental health. Volunteering is a donation of time and expertise, and although these things are extremely valuable to individual lives, they serve the important purpose of spreading compassion and kindness. No meaning can be found in a life of selfishness. Because of this, true fulfillment isn't achieved by serving ourselves but instead by uplifting others: our communities, our neighbors, and our world.

Works Cited

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