



# The Benefits of Community Service to the College Application

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Volunteering seems to be simple: give some of your time to charity, and you meet some of your college application requirements.

But it is far more complicated. How does it serve as a support to the society, and what is its importance? Is this what schools seek in an applicant?

We have the alternative perspective of volunteering here at Success Pathway and how community work can increase the odds of entry to college; we know that community service contributes to a student's acceptance into college. So how is community engagement regarded in the implementation of a student, and what do they do?

While grades are still the most important measure when colleges are evaluating applicants, grades are not enough to guarantee admission. Colleges care just as much what students are doing outside the classroom as how well they are doing inside. Colleges expect to see students involved in activities outside of the classroom, which make an impact in their local community. Community service is one way to accomplish that.



## **The Importance of Community Service**

Community service is a way for students to learn what they are passionate about as well as making an impact in their community. It is much more than checking the box on a college application and can be extremely rewarding. Volunteering allows a student to show their compassion, leadership, creativity and depth of character. Colleges are looking for students who not only do well in the classroom but who will also make a positive impact on the campus and surrounding community. Admissions officers also value community service because it shows that a student is most likely to “share the school’s values” and will “contribute to the school’s mission.” Community service is a tool to show which student is a good-fit for their school as admissions officers are looking for students who will be a benefit to their school.



## **Quality over Quantity**

It is important to show on the college application community service activities that the student enjoys and that aligns with their interests. Colleges are very aware when students are padding their activity lists in order to impress admissions officers. The quality of community service activities, a few that have vested time in over a couple years are more impressive than quantity, several activities for short amounts of time.

## **What is Community Service?**

Community service is the volunteering of your time, with no pay, to help people in need, often through a non-profit organization.

Below are some ways to give back:

- Helping someone who is disabled or elderly with chores around their house. The same chores in your own household do not count.
- Volunteering to referee or help coach a youth sports team. Playing or practicing with a team does not count.
- Volunteering at a hospital, animal shelter or library. Getting paid for those hours does not count.
- Performing at a charitable event. Performing in the school play does not count.
- Watching children during a church service or helping at a camp. . Being paid to babysit does not count.

## **How Many Hours of Service Do I Need?**



The exact amount of time spent doing community service is unimportant for the college application. However, some high schools do have a required number of hours for graduation. A few hours of volunteer work over your four years of high school would not give the college the impression that a student is civic-minded. Generally, the aim should be to complete at least 50-200 hours of community service during your high school career. Bare in mind, colleges look at the quality of work completed, not the

quantity.

### **How Will My Community Service Be Evaluated?**

Colleges are interested in students who participate in authentic, meaningful community service, which will help to deepen their sense of gratitude and responsibility for the future.

- Students should choose from opportunities that come from their passions and interests.
- Students should plan to spend a year on a sustained service or community engagement. Community engagement refers to working with a group on local problems, like beautifying a local park or participating in an environmental initiative. Working on one project over a long period of time shows consistency and commitment rather than working on several different projects to ‘collect’ hours, and example of quality over quantity. Individual community service is valuable, but community engagement helps to develop problem-solving skills, group awareness and an understanding of and investment in the common good.

The bottom line is, it is not about how much volunteering is done, and it is not about a service project that no other applicant has ever done before. An admissions officer will be looking for the student that values community service they are passionate about, committed to, which betters the student’s community, builds skills, and deepens their understanding of the world around them.