

## Volunteerism/ Community Involvement

### Summary:

#### Why do people volunteer?

1. there is a need
2. enjoyment
3. socialization
4. learn skills
5. develop experience
6. engage in a new experience
7. develop community

#### Two questions to ask about volunteerism

1. What are the needs?
2. What do I enjoy?

#### Advantages of volunteerism

1. help decide what to do full time
2. get valuable experience
3. develop good work habits
4. exposure to highly skilled mentors
5. opportunity to be more creative and not restricted to “rules”

#### Points about volunteerism

1. volunteerism is not a “quick fix”
2. not exactly the same as a regular job
3. some may not appreciate your work and even resist you

One of the foundation beliefs of World Changers Academy is volunteerism. What exactly is volunteerism? Volunteerism is working without pay. That may seem strange to some people. You might ask “why would anyone want to work without pay?”

Volunteerism is popular for a number of reasons. Why do people engage in volunteerism? There are lots of reasons why they do. Here are some:

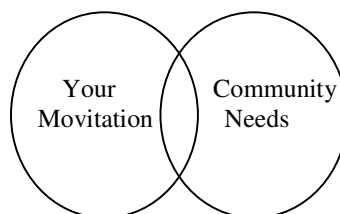
1. *Because of needs* – Many people are motivated to do work because there is a need. For example, during Christmas many people collect toys to give to poor children who may not have any toys at all. Some people will clean up vacant lots because they are unsightly. Some will coach sports teams for young children because they want to see children have constructive and positive experiences.
2. *Because of enjoyment* – Some people will engage in volunteerism because they enjoy the work. For example, some will stage dramas or musical performances because they enjoy doing drama and music. Others will work in schools because they like working with children.
3. *Because of socialization* – Some people will do volunteer work because of the people they work with. For example, many people like to socialize and they find like-minded people in doing certain work. Some people like books so they will volunteer to work in the library and that way they get to meet others who like to read. Others may coach children’s sports teams because they enjoy socializing with others who also like sports.

4. *Because of skills* – Some people will engage in volunteerism because it enables them to sharpen their skills in something they are good at. For example, a good singer might help put on a Christmas musical program to have a chance to sing. A gardener may help plant flowers because he/she can continue to develop his/her talents.
5. *To develop experience* – Some people may engage in volunteerism to learn a skill and pick up valuable experience. Some one may want to be a soccer referee. Obviously one doesn't start at first refereeing in the World Cup. That person must start at "the bottom", and that usually means refereeing children's games.
6. *For a new experience* – Most people like some variety in their lives. Sometimes we see an activity and think we might enjoy doing it. Volunteerism is one way of having a new experience. For example, you might want to be a businessperson but you aren't sure. You could volunteer to do promotional activity for the school fund-raiser. This way you can see if you like this type of work or not.
7. *To develop the community* – Some people want to live in a safe, secure, beautiful community. They will do certain volunteer work so that their neighborhoods will be developed. For example, people will clean up vacant lots to make the neighborhood more beautiful. Others will work at school fund-raisers to help the school purchase needed supplies.

There are various other reasons why people might engage in volunteerism. Some people are just bored and looking for something to fill their time. Others feel a genuine need to serve. What motivates you to volunteer? How do you get started? There are two questions you need to ask. Find where the answers to these questions overlap, and that is where you need to start. These two areas are:

1. *Your motivation* – First you need to know what makes you excited. What do you want to do? For example, let's say you do not enjoy sports much at all. Then, don't do sports volunteerism. But let's say you love to cook. Well, look for ways to cook.
2. *Community needs* – Next, you need to know what the needs of your community are. For example, you may really enjoy "bird watching." This is a hobby enjoyed by many people. However, there may not be any need, or interest, in your community for bird watching. On the other hand you may like gardening. If there are people who are struggling to do gardening, then that is a good place to volunteer.

Sometimes the opportunities are easy to find. Other times you will have to make your own opportunity. Some times you may find lots of resistance to volunteerism even when there is a great need.



Where do they overlap?

**Activity:**

In a group take five minutes to list all the needs you see in your neighborhood. Don't leave any item out whether it is very big or very small. List everything you can think of. You may see some needs that others don't consider a need. That is okay. List it anyway.

There are many advantages to volunteerism. Here are some:

1. The experience can help you decide what you may want to do full time. For example, let's say you are thinking about being a nurse. By volunteering in a nursing situation you will learn what it is like. This can help in making your decision.
2. Volunteerism can help you get valuable experience. Let's say you do some volunteerism in the area of nursing. This can be very valuable when you go to nursing school. This may even help you get in to nursing school. If you do well someone may be very happy to write you a letter of reference (letter of recommendation).
3. The experience can help you develop good work habits. Sometimes people cannot keep their jobs because they lack basic job things like being punctual, arriving on time, being dependable, getting along with others, taking orders, giving orders, following instructions, taking initiative, etc. Volunteerism can help you develop these essential elements that you may lack.
4. The experience can expose you to highly skilled mentors. For example, probably the best way to learn to cook is to assist someone who is already a good cook. Probably the best way to learn to coach soccer is to work with someone who is a good soccer coach. Often volunteerism can give you the experience of working with a master.
5. Sometimes volunteers can be more creative and are not restricted by job "rules." As a volunteer you are not usually tied to certain job requirements. You may be able to try new things that a boss might not normally consider. For example, if you are helping teach children English, you don't have to give grades or tests. You can play games or sing songs that a regular school teacher might not be able to do in a school setting.

There are some points that need to be emphasized about volunteerism. They are:

1. Volunteerism is not a "quick fix." Volunteerism will not automatically get you a job. The benefits of volunteerism may be forthcoming only many years later. Sometimes the benefits may be difficult to directly measure.
2. Volunteerism is not exactly the same as a regular job. While much valuable experience may be gained by volunteerism, it is usually not the same as working for pay. Often people will be less demanding with volunteers. For example, let's say you are helping neighborhood children in preparing for a mathematics examination. You meet with them several times per week and help them with their difficulties. If the children fail, you are not likely to be blamed. On the other hand, if you are doing this for pay, the parents may be upset with you for their child's failure because they expect more of you.
3. Some people may not appreciate your work and even resist you. Sometimes people, for whatever reasons, do not appreciate certain volunteer work. Sometimes this is true even if the work will benefit them. For example, let's say you are running a tutoring program for children to teach them English. Sometimes the parents will not cooperate by sending their children to you. The parents may not even care. Some may not understand and even work against you. If you are a coach some parents will want their child to play. They may think their child is a better player than he/she really is. They may work against you if they feel their child is not getting picked to play often enough. In some cases you may see a great need but others in the community may not see this as a problem. For example, you may think having small vegetable gardens as

important. Others may not see this need at all and would rather spend their time doing other things.

**Activity:**

In groups, think up three volunteerism activities for your community. You don't have to actually do these so you might be rather creative. Try to describe as many details as possible for these activities.