

Council: Youth Assembly II

Issue: The importance of volunteering

Student Officers: Stavros Antonopoulos, Christina Loukopoulou

Position: Head and Co-Head respectively

Introduction

“And in my own life, in my own small way, I've tried to give back to this country that has given me so much. That's why I left a job at a law firm for a career in public service, working to empower young people to volunteer in their communities. Because I believe that each of us - no matter what our age or background or walk of life - each of us has something to contribute to the life of this nation.” This quote by Michelle Obama fully embraces the meaning of a noble act that should concern everyone in our modern society, voluntary work. In this D.S.A. M.U.N 2012 the Action Paper II will be on the importance of volunteering which is a significant yet sensitive issue. Regarding the Youth Assembly we wish to see you all eager to cooperate with each other and ready to make new friends. Youth Assembly is a great introductory experience to the magnificent world of M.U.N. and an opportunity to grasp the ideas of collaboration, diplomacy and respect.

Definition of Key-Terms

Term: Volunteering

To volunteer means to choose to act after recognizing a need with an attitude of responsibility towards society and with no expectation for a monetary reward for one's efforts. Volunteering is generally considered a noble and altruistic action that goes beyond one's basic obligation. Volunteering is a basic building block of civil society. It brings to life the noblest aspirations of mankind the pursuit of peace, freedom, equality of opportunity, safety and prosperity as well as justice and brotherhood for all people. This action can be performed both in organized groups and on one's own but the ultimate goal is the enhancement of living standards and quality of life, the relief of a social group or generally the promotion of common good.

Background Information

1. Why people volunteer

For a start, nobody is obliged to volunteer, volunteering is a noble act exactly because it is by no means mandatory. The main reasons we should volunteer revolve around two main axes: the first one is about volunteering and the common good and the second one has to do with the personal benefits.

a) Volunteering and the common good

At first as the abovementioned quote by Michelle Obama depicts the moral duty citizens feel towards the state. This sense of duty to benefit the society in return for the goods it provides becomes the driving force for most volunteers. Obviously, another reason people volunteer is because they are passionate about something and hence, enjoy their time while doing it. For example people who have a particular interest in the preservation of biodiversity and the

maintenance of fragile ecosystems, often find themselves volunteering for an organization that keeps the coastline clean.

Also people who have a personal attachment with their local community become volunteers in order to enhance not only their quality of life but also the living standards of their fellow civilians. People who have faced in the past social issues are also willing to help others overcome societal difficulties through voluntary work.

Others feel that volunteering offers unique opportunities for somebody to explore a new culture and meet with locals. Volunteering abroad is an exceptional way to spend a significantly extended amount of time in another country and enables a person to interact with other cultures, speak and learn foreign languages and meet new interesting people. Volunteering abroad is a chance for people to get accustomed to a new way of life in another country.

b) Personal benefits

Undoubtedly some people volunteer because of the enormous benefits this action has on their character. All volunteers report to the media that volunteering changes a person from the inside and makes him more compassionate and aware of the problem other people face. People who volunteered abroad become more independent and tend to describe themselves before voluntary work as narrow-minded ignorant and unaware of the good a volunteer can offer. Volunteers also acquire new skills depending on the work they do. They gain experience related to animal care or healthcare or conservation of the environment. These skills help volunteers not only to find a job but to explore their talents and interests.

Also volunteers feel a sense of achievement and this is priceless as they say. The most important payback to their efforts is the sense of accomplishment they feel after the work is done and the feeling that they made the difference in another's life. Lastly, volunteering allows you to make new friends either from the same country or from abroad and enhances your communication and collaboration skills.

2. Different Types of volunteering

There are many ways to contribute to the prosperity of the people in today's world as there are many different types of volunteering.

a) Environmental Volunteering

Refers to actions that have to do with environmental conservation and protection of biodiversity. It includes the cleaning of beaches and areas of natural beauty. It is also closely associated with animal care and animal conservation. Also relief from natural disasters such as the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka through volunteering is considered another way of volunteering the emergency volunteering after environmental disasters...

b) Community Volunteering

Is mostly about boosting local initiatives that aim to improve the quality of life in the community. These initiatives are including sometimes the volunteering in schools which occurs when the economy of a country is dwindling and the resources the government is able to allocate on school funding are scarce. School volunteering which is a smaller category of community volunteering and has helped cities or minor towns to combat the problem posed by lack of teachers in a cost effective yet reliable way. Other examples of community volunteering are the construction of a new children playground or the renovation of an orphanage.

c) Online Volunteering

Online volunteering is done via the internet and is a very efficient way to volunteer provided that you have a device with internet connection. Online volunteering is frequently described as the future of volunteerism for it embraces the characteristics of a new era the era of internet and social networking. Micro Volunteering is a different way to volunteering by offering small bits of your time that vary from 5 minutes to 3 hours and even more. It is a sub-category of online volunteering and it is popular with young people. Online volunteerism in general has great advantages and almost no limits in its efficiency.

3. Where and how can we volunteer?

There is not a specific area, where you can volunteer. Nevertheless, below there are presented some areas, where people have practiced the noble activity of volunteerism. Volunteering is all about doing good and unfortunately today there are many places where hunger and environmental disasters have taken their toll on the people who live there... You can volunteer almost everywhere because almost all countries have agencies and organizations that have to do with volunteering

a) Food bank

At a food bank you can help put food in boxes and hand it over to homeless people and generally people who need it. You can cook for the food bank and clean up the place.

b) Thrift store

At a thrift store you can sort clothes, clean, help customers and price items.

c) Hand meals to elderly folks

If you have access to publicly transportation you can easily hand over meals to elderly people, who are not able to buy their own food.

d) Cleaning up open-air areas

Cleaning up open-air areas such as beaches and parks is often entertaining and gives you the chance to improve your environment.

e) Professional volunteering

- Doctors and medics often travel to LEDC's to help combat a disease or offer some medication aid to children and adults.
- There are many initiatives organized by citizens, in order to help their neighbor, which are actually also their job.
- Teaching faculties also travel to LEDC's, in order to provide free education to children of the area.

f) Environmental volunteering and other cases

After natural disasters and wars the entire society needs re-building and re-constructing. For example after the 2010 Haiti earthquake many citizens helped finding the survivors of this terrible disaster, provided medicational and financial aid.

g) Animal-rescue companies

It is also a great opportunity to volunteer by joining an animal-rescue company and help the faculty there. Your responsibilities can differ; sometimes you have to help rescue an animal in severe condition, sometimes you have also to provide the animals in the centre with care and caress.

4.The benefits of volunteering

Perhaps one of the better-known benefits of volunteering is the impact on the community. Unpaid volunteers are often the chain holds a community together. They have one major aim: to improve our society. Nevertheless, volunteering benefits both you and the cause you choose to help.

a) social aspect

One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity together. Volunteering is a great way to find new friends and contacts, because first of all it enhances your current ties to the community and broadens your contacts, secondly it exposes you directly to people who share with you the same interests, and last but not least volunteering is a fun and fulfilling activity.

b) personal aspect

People differ in their characters. Some are naturally outgoing, others are shy and need time to build a relationship. Volunteering helps you develop your social skills, since it brings you close to people with common interests

However, volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self-confidence, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. You are doing “good” for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. The more you feel you are developing your self-esteem, the more it is likely to achieve your desired goals in the future.

Mental disorders such as depression can also be combated by the noble activity of volunteering. A key risk factor for depression is social isolation. Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system

c) professional aspect

If you are considering choosing a new career, volunteering can be the ideal aid for you in gaining experience in the area you want and meeting people in the field without making a long-term commitment. Important skills such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, project planning and task management can be practiced by the opportunities volunteering offers you.

d) recreational aspect

Exploring your interests and passions through volunteering is easy and entertaining. Doing volunteer work you find meaningful and interesting can be a relaxing, energizing escape from your day-to-day routine. Volunteering also provides you with renewed creativity, motivation, and vision that can carry over into your personal and professional life.

5.The rewards of volunteering

Behaving generously not only feels good, a growing body of research suggests, it actually improves a person's physical and psychological health. Volunteering has also been shown to have a positive effect on people's mental state, particularly as they age. Volunteerism serves as a way to keep older adults active in the community and prevents them from becoming socially isolated and combats mental disorders such as depression and minimizes for example the suicide rates. Children in the puberty haven't been always immune to the mood-changing phases of the puberty. Volunteerism helps them to create and enhance a more stable character, while it repels them from pleasure-happiness-seeking activities such as drinking alcohol or consuming drugs. At every age is volunteering constructive, especially at those, where people have started to develop their character.

Age groups

When referring to age groups, it is meant, at which age you can start volunteering. Actually, there is not an accurate age, where people can start with this special activity. Volunteerism yields for every age various values.

a) Elderly people

Older people often have a tendency of becoming isolated and feeling lonely. It is a great opportunity, when older people volunteer, because they are not at risk of developing various disorders such as Alzheimer, Parkinson, depression and other mental-and physical- disorders. They come in touch with the community and other people at their age, who encounter the same issues. A survey of a well-known British newspaper pulled the conclusion that older people, who are volunteering and help a cause, live longer, because of the happiness and fulfillment they have.

b) Middle-aged people

People, who have often stabilized their career and are covering the half of their life, are also a great example of, why people should volunteer. Most of the times they have build up a family and their children are growing more and more. Volunteering is the best way to set this activity as a family tradition and teach the children, why we should help a cause. However, volunteering is also very constructive for people not having children. Through volunteering you can easily enhance relationships and develop new ones. Volunteerism makes you feel more close to the community.

c) Young people

Volunteering is also vital for young people such as students and also people who are tackling with the difficulties of stabilizing their upcoming career. It helps you build a healthy character and maybe opens you also different career opportunities. Nevertheless, young people learn to be in a group with different people than they used to meet. It is a significant milestone for their future.

d) Children

Perhaps the importance of children volunteering is most vital from all other age groups. Children are developing their character and become more independent from their parents, as they have to learn to communicate with other children and people of the community. It is also the most important point of their evolution, that sets up the upcoming difficulties in life. Children learn to be more tolerant and are starting to accept different opinions.

6. The importance of volunteering

“What can I do to change the world? I am only one person!” Most if not all of us have felt that way, at some time or other, and that’s perfectly normal. Imagine for a moment-even if your personal effort may be small, it can still make a change, whether you notice it right away or not. Your assistance of any manner is always precious, even vital! The most common reason, why people volunteer, is because of the satisfaction and their inner voices by assisting a cause. Through volunteering you gain a life experience, which you are going to remember for the rest of your life. You do not have to make major achievements. Every single milestone to someone’s path can be a lot helpful if even vital. Do something extraordinary and you won’t regret it!

7. Misconceptions

Unfortunately there are some people that refuse to volunteer because they have either been misinformed or misguided to believe false indications that volunteering can become dangerous. Some people are afraid of being robbed while volunteering but the truth is as many volunteers in African countries have stated, volunteers are respected among local communities and admired because of the work they do. Locals love volunteers instead of trying to cheat them... Also a portion of the people who want to volunteer is not informed enough which can create even more misconceptions.

Timeline of Events

1920	After WWI Austrians, French, Swiss and Germans rebuild a village near Verdun that was destroyed.
1920	Service Civil International. S.C.I. is founded
1960's	Long-term volunteer programs take off-War on Poverty (1964)
1970's	Creation of the UN Volunteers program.
2000's	Major natural disasters such as the 2004 Tsunami in Indonesia, the hurricane Katrina in the U.S.A. in 2005 and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 activate volunteers and relief projects

Bibliography

1. <http://www.helpguide.org>
2. <http://volunteers.townofmanchester.org>
3. <http://www.sunnyslopecommunity.org>
4. <http://www.articles.latimes.com>
5. <http://www.pledgingforchange.com>
6. <http://www.pbskids.org>
7. <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org>
8. <http://www.i-to-i.com>
9. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/volunteer.html#0eVcBLhdUB6dHt0a.99>
10. <http://www.i-to-i.com/why-do-people-volunteer.html>
11. <http://www.go-volunteerabroad.com/volunteer-abroad-blog/misconceptions-about-volunteering-in-mexico/5030>
12. <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/browse/countries/azerbaijan/doc/a-very-short-history.html>
13. <http://www.sparked.com/microvolunteering>