



Delta Gamma Well Aware

Encompasses eight dimensions: Social, Spiritual, Physical, Emotional, Vocational, Intellectual, Financial and Leadership Development

Community Service: How Does It Impact You?

Community service programs are ever-increasing in today's society. High schools, colleges, and even work places organize programs with local homeless shelters, elementary schools, food banks, city parks, etc. These programs possess a tremendous benefit for the recipient and enable the agency being served to continue with their good work. However community service also has the potential to benefit us, the service giver.

A theoretical framework termed symbolic interactionism illuminates one way service is beneficial to us. Specifically, symbolic interactionists believe that we are ever-changing beings and not static. This means that biology alone does not determine who we are but that we evolve. We evolve through our interaction with others. Specifically, how we perceive that others perceive us plays an integral role in who we are. For example, if your friend tells a joke and you are offended by the joke, your friend's image of herself shifts to accommodate this negative feedback. Likewise, if your friend tells a joke and you laugh, she will incorporate this feedback into her self-concept as positive and will continue telling the joke to others. A simpler example is when a friend tells us she likes your new haircut this feedback becomes integrated into our perception of our self and we begin thinking, "Gee, I do have a good haircut."

Since our sense of self is largely dependent on others' perception of our actions, it is useful to apply symbolic interactionism to service. Community service provides a useful vehicle to both positively shape our selves and the clients we serve. For example, when volunteering at a local nursing home, your sense of self and the resident's sense of self will be altered. While listening to the residents' stories you will most likely be in awe of their experiences and comment with warm thoughts signifying your gratitude for their accomplishments and positive impact on the world. These positive comments reinforce to the resident that they are a valued person and offer much to the world. Likewise, the residents may complement and thank you for spending time with them and are appreciative of your good work. They might even give you a hug and a smile that warms your heart. This simple heart-felt thank you reminds us of our ability to powerfully influence others. These comments shape the way we see ourselves telling

us that we have the ability to impact the world in positive ways. It may even inform us of our privilege, making us a more aware individual.

Delta Gamma's Golden Anchor Program

Delta Gamma encourages our members to engage service, particularly Service for Sight related activities. One Service for Sight volunteer opportunity is the Golden Anchor Program. The purpose of the Golden Anchor Program is to assist Delta Gamma senior citizens, as well as other senior citizens who reside in all types of health care facilities throughout the United States and Canada, by bringing joy to their life.

Collegians, partner with your vice-president: Foundation to initiate this meaningful program and make it a part of your chapter. Alumnae, work with your local alumnae group to jumpstart this program. Consider integrating your local collegiate chapter into the program, creating a collumnae opportunity. Contact the Director of Resource Development to learn about the impact program at wellaware@deltagamma.org.

Resources

For information on Delta Gamma's Golden Anchor Program visit

http://www.deltagamma.org/golden_anchor.shtml

For information on other Service for Sight related programs visit

http://www.deltagamma.org/assistance_to_blind_and_vi.shtml

For information on how and where to volunteer visit <http://www.volunteer.gov/gov/>

or <http://servenet.org/>

References

Rhoads, R. (1997). *Community service and higher learning: Explorations of the caring self*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Sweet, S. (1999). Understanding fraternity hazing: Insights from symbolic interactionist theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40(4), 355-364.

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for hope. for strength. for life.