

Give The Gift of Community Service

Sound Advice from

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As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, it is refreshing to pause from the many challenges we face and give thanks to one priceless and timeless gift that so many residents up and down the central coast give on a regular basis - the gift of community service. Not only does community service provide the foundation for countless organizations, it also provides many benefits for those who do the volunteering.

Healthy

Experts will tell you that when you focus on someone other than yourself, it can be essential in reducing tension. Plus, the satisfaction of providing a helping hand and the joy that comes from the physical nature of volunteering can help strengthen your immune system and increase your overall health.

There are many ways to volunteer your time, so look for an activity or organization that provides enjoyment for you. A great way to get involved is to provide support for community resources that impact you or your family, or for some cause that benefits people you care about. Once you find a good match, the time spent on volunteer work really becomes a labor of love rather than laborious.

Wealthy

The estimated value of volunteer service is more than \$15 per hour. That means that for every 10 hours a person volunteers his or her time, that enables \$150 to be spent on materials such as food, clothing, research, or other valuable resources.

In many cases, volunteer work can be a way to test-drive a certain career or skill and gain much needed experience. You may even discover hidden talents you never knew you possessed, which can increase your self-esteem and may even translate into financial benefits in the future.

Wise

When you take an active role in your community, you become more aware of the goings on around you. It is easy to sit on the sidelines and be critical of decisions that are made or of programs that are implemented. But when you take part in the process, you develop a stronger appreciation for it. Plus, identifying and utilizing the necessary resources to solve the needs of your community is often an awakening experience.

Often times, volunteer service means that diverse individuals unite for a common goal. The lessons learned can further enhance your people skills, especially when the team you are working with accomplishes what you set out to do.

The bottom line in volunteer service is simple: It is a great investment in your community and in the people who live in it. So, make a goal to get involved, to volunteer your time, and to make a difference in your neighbors' lives.

For more information on how to choose the right community service opportunity, go to www.serve.gov.