The Simple Things

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Abstract

The less fortunate are always the most grateful. They prefer time and a warm hug over luxuries. What happens when you become involved in your community by giving back? This paper will inform the readers about the benefits of paying it forward and giving back to the community.

*Keywords*: Pay it forward, grateful, community, volunteer
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Imagine the joy on a child's face after opening their Easter eggs! Now, imagine how amazing it must feel to be the reason for that joy! The researcher has been volunteering at the North-West Georgia Crisis Center since January of this year. The importance of community involvement is tremendous, yet it is often not taken seriously. It only takes a few hours of your time to make a difference in someone's life. The researcher has experienced an enormous change within herself after giving back to her community. She has also witnessed the difference it makes in the children and women from the center. Don’t have the time to volunteer, there are other options like donating and paying it forward. This research will explain the importance of giving back.

To begin, the researcher has firsthand experienced the difference it makes in people's life just by contributing with time. The researcher gives back by helping the Northwest Georgia Crisis Center with events. The most recent event that she helped with was a toiletry donation. She gathered many toiletries to donate to the center. These toiletries are simple things that we sometimes take for granted but others are in dire need of. This specific center houses families that are victims of domestic violence. Most of the victims are children and women. The researcher also gives her time by volunteering to help with events at the center. She helped with an Easter hunt back in the spring. She was impacted by the smiles on the children's faces after finding the hidden eggs. Most of these children have never experienced happiness like this because they come from violent homes. Another event that the researcher helped with was the Teen Dating Violence Dance. This dance was meant to bring awareness to teen dating violence. The event made a difference in these teenagers’ lives. They were able to see the dangers of teen dating violence and how to stop it. The teenagers were also able to see that others care for their
well-being. The women in the center become more inspired when they see that others care for them. They eventually find stable jobs to help themselves and move out on their own. The researcher has been able to make new friendships and life lasting memories by volunteering at these events. The changes in their lives by these small acts of kindness are endless and unforgettable.

Additionally, there was a survey given to students from an English 3000 class. The survey consisted of several questions to get an understanding of their thoughts on giving back and generosity. The survey was taken by nine females and six males. Their ages were from eighteen to thirty and older. Ten of the participants were white, four Hispanics, and one black. The participants were also asked if they had done a good deed during the week. The majority of them answered yes. Their good deeds consisted of helping to open doors, giving a gift to someone, giving compliments, and paying for someone's lunch. Another question in the survey was if they had recently volunteered for a nonprofit organization. There were only four students who answered yes to volunteering. They were also asked if they thought people were more generous during the holidays. One student said, "Yes there is something about the holidays that brings out the best in people" (English 3000 survey, personal communication, October 25, 2017). There were several students who also give donations to organizations like the Red Cross. When asked if they had ever paid it forward the majority of the students answered yes. They have paid it forward by buying others food, gas, clothes, and coffee. They were also asked how giving back made them feel. One student said, "You are sending a message that all people matter and deserve respect" (English 3000 survey, personal communication, October 25, 2017). The feeling of giving back is an amazing feeling of accomplishment. All the students except two feel that they
are generous individuals. The reasoning for them feeling this way might be because of not volunteering enough or the feeling of guilt for not doing it often.

Furthermore, I interviewed an employee of the Northwest Georgia Crisis Center. The researcher asked similar questions as the ones asked to the English 3000 class. One question in particular that was asked in the interview was how she felt to work for the center. She said, "I enjoy making a difference in these families’ lives" (Laura Mares, personal communication, October 27, 2017). She works at the center as volunteer coordinator. She is in charge of bringing new volunteers and donations in. She organizes the events and fundraisers. This organization is a non-profit, and it heavily depends on the generous donors and volunteers. Laura says that she has seen many families positively impacted by the kind acts of strangers volunteering their time at the shelter. She often sees a decrease in the volunteers instead of the numbers increasing. She also said that the women from the shelter see other women as positive role models because of their kind gestures. There is always a need for volunteers. The center constantly brings in new families that get there with nothing. The donors and volunteers are what keeps the shelter up and running.

Additionally, the researcher also found outside sources that discuss similar thoughts about volunteering and giving back. In the United States, only one out of three adults regularly spend time volunteering (Winerman, 2006). He also says that people find more reasons to not volunteer than to actually volunteer. Volunteering adds value to your own life. It is important to understand other cultures and volunteering provides this understanding. It has also been proven to enhance your personal development (New England College, 2017). Volunteering is a way of helping organizations, but you are also helping yourself build skills. It is said that volunteering helps with stress and greater efficiency in everyday tasks (Watson, 2015). It has also been linked
to lowering the risk of depression and lower blood pressure. Studies have shown that volunteering helps people who donate their time feel more socially connected, thus warding off loneliness and depression (Watson, 2015). Volunteering can actually do more for us than we think we are doing for others.

To conclude, volunteering and giving back extends far beyond the feeling of a warm heart and sense of accomplishment. Volunteering comes with a rewarding sensation of gratitude. Volunteering is something that needs to be done more often. It is a form of self-care. You will not only be helping others, but you will be also helping yourself. There have been proven benefits that come from volunteering. Volunteering has helped with depression, blood pressure, and stress. There are many ways to give back. Dedicate time by volunteering. Donating to a charity is another form of giving back. The impact that it makes in someone's life by giving a little bit of time is amazing. Volunteering is a way of giving back to the community. Volunteers are most likely to last longer if they are doing it for the right reason and not to benefit themselves. Humans are capable of doing a good deed for the pureness of someone else's benefit.
References

