



## VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1. There is an application fee of \$10 that is required for all applicants. What is this fee for? What if I can't pay? Can I sponsor a student?**

The application fee helps cover the cost of the school patch letter, pins, community service patch, and award packet.

If you are not able to pay this fee, email [Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org](mailto:Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org) or call **973.993.1160, x603** with the reason and any documentation you may have around financial aid.

If you are interested in sponsoring one or more students' applications, please email [Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org](mailto:Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org) or call **973.993.1160, x603**. Sponsorship checks can be made out payable to United Way of Northern New Jersey. Please indicate Varsity Letter in the check memo line and mail checks to:

United Way of Northern New Jersey, Attn: Varsity Letter  
P.O. Box 6835  
Bridgewater, NJ 08807

**2. The Varsity Letter in Community Service program requirements state that I must complete at least 120 hours of volunteer service and within that, 30 hours of "United Way aligned service work." What type of volunteer work satisfies this requirement? How do I record and verify my hours?**

United Way's focus is on helping **ALICE**<sup>®</sup> (**A**sset Limited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed) families to live successfully in our community. ALICE families are hardworking people who struggle to cover the basics: housing, food, child care, transportation, and health care. United Way's work focuses on three areas – education, income, and health – which all help ALICE to work towards a more stable future.

All volunteer work must be completed with a nonprofit organization that has a 501(c)3 status, governmental or school organization, but at least 30 hours must be completed doing work that aligns with United Way of Northern New Jersey's work. Aligned options can be found below and online at our Get Connected site at [UnitedWayNNJ.galaxydigital.com](http://UnitedWayNNJ.galaxydigital.com).

Examples of volunteer opportunities that align with United Way's work include:

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United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community.

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- Hosting a food collection drive, stocking, and distributing food at a food bank
  - Reading to children, collecting new or gently used children's books for donation, or acting as a volunteer tutor for a younger child
  - Hosting a coat or winter clothing drive to ensure all families are warm and protected from the winter elements
  - Hosting a school supplies drive so that all children have the tools they need for success in school
  - Hosting a holiday gift drive for children from struggling families

All volunteer hours, general and those connected to United Way's work, must be verifiable and supported with a signature of a supervisor, on a Varsity Letter Volunteer Hours form. United Way will provide one to each participant to use.

**3. One of the Varsity Letter in Community Service program requirements is to complete at least one "school activity." What type of volunteer work counts as a school activity? How many volunteer hours do I need for this requirement?**

Below is a list of possible "school activities." If you are uncertain whether an activity would fulfill this requirement, please contact us.

- Participating in a community service project through a club (Honor Society, Key Club, etc.)
- Volunteering with a parent/teacher organization within the school or school district
- Assisting at sporting events, concerts, or theater productions (if not required for a class)
- Tutoring peers through a school tutoring program

Although there is a requirement that students complete at least one "school activity," there is no requirement for a specific number of volunteer hours for that activity.

Sometimes work done through a school group with an outside organization can be counted as either school-related or non-school-related (i.e. Key Club participating in Relay for Life). In this case, students may count the hours where they are needed to fill requirements.

**4. I volunteered on a mission trip through my place of worship. How do I count these hours?**

If you volunteer on a mission trip or other volunteer vacation, the hours are calculated as follows:

- During the school year: 10 hours per day
- During the summer or school breaks: 15 hours per day

If you have documentation proving that you served more than this number of hours per day during a mission trip or other volunteer vacation, you may submit it with your application and will be credited with these hours if we are able to verify them through your provided contact.

**5. I volunteered as a camp counselor, how do I count those hours?**

If you volunteer as a camp counselor, those hours are calculated as follows:

- During the school year: 10 hours per day
  - During the summer or school breaks: 15 hours per day
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If you have documentation proving that you served more than these hours per day as a volunteer camp counselor, you may submit it with your application and will be credited with these hours if we are able to verify them through your provided contact.

**6. Can I count hours from club meetings?**

If you participate in a school service club, you may count any hours that are spent organizing and implementing a service project. If you are in a club that uses meeting times to discuss other club business, you may not count those hours. Only hours spent planning and participating in a service project will count as community service hours.

**7. I volunteer as a sports manager with my school's team. Do these hours count?**

Typically, you can earn a sports management letter if you volunteer with a varsity-level team. If this option is available at your school, you will not be permitted to count sports management hours toward earning your Varsity Letter in Community Service. If your time is spent volunteering with a community sports group or with younger students (i.e. you are in high school and help with a middle or elementary school team), your hours will most likely count. Please contact us if you are unsure.

**8. Can I count my time babysitting or helping with yardwork or housework?**

Any babysitting, yardwork, or housework performed with a nonprofit CAN be counted toward this award. In cases where you are assisting an individual on your own, we require the individual have a documented need and not be related to you. To qualify, the recipient must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Receive Medicaid benefits (low-income individual)
- Receive SSDI (individuals with a disability)

United Way will need to contact the recipient and verify that they meet the above criteria.

**9. I must complete community service hours so that I can graduate. Can I count these hours toward earning my Varsity Letter in Community Service?**

Any community service or volunteer hours applied toward a graduation requirement DO NOT count towards your Varsity Letter in Community Service. Volunteer hours that can be applied toward earning a varsity letter are to be done beyond what is required for graduation. If, for example, you are required to complete 20 hours of service as part of your project for graduation, but you wind up volunteering for 30 hours instead, then you will only be able to count the 10 additional hours you worked toward earning your varsity letter.

**10. I must complete community service hours for a class. Can I count these hours?**

Any community service or volunteer hours completed as a requirement for a class DO NOT count towards your Varsity Letter in Community Service. Volunteer hours that are counted for the varsity letter are to be done beyond class requirements.

**11. I job shadowed. Can I count these hours?**

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No. Hours spent performing a job shadow does not count for this award, even if it is with a nonprofit or school organization.

**12. I volunteered with a local company but wasn't paid for my work. Can I count these hours?**

No. Volunteer hours must be completed with a nonprofit agency or school.

**13. I volunteered with my family. Can one of my parents be the contact for verification of my volunteer hours?**

Unless your parent works for the organization you volunteered with, you may not have your parent sign off on your hours. You will need to get the contact information for the organization representative who can verify your volunteer work. In cases where your parent does work for the organization, it is still preferable to have someone unrelated to you as your contact.

**14. I volunteered several hours with an organization I am a member of (i.e. my church, Boy/Girl Scouts, etc.). Do these hours count?**

Since you are a member, hours can only be counted when you are doing service with your organization for other people or an outside group, like a nonprofit. If your organization was hosting a food drive or spaghetti night that benefitted an outside agency, then hours spent setting up and collecting or serving food would count. However, hours spent benefitting the organization itself such as singing in the choir at your church, setting up an event for your own Scout troop, ushering at your organization's event, etc. would not count. If you aren't sure, please contact us ahead of time.

If you don't find the answers to your questions here, please call **973.993.1160, x603** or email **[Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org](mailto:Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org)**

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