

# 2016-2017 Varsity Letter in Community Service

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United Way of Pierce County partners with Pierce County schools to recognize and reward students for their volunteer efforts in the community. Please be sure to review this document carefully as the requirements for the 2016-2017 school year may have changed.

The application process will open June 17, 2016 at [www.uwpc.org/varsity-letter](http://www.uwpc.org/varsity-letter).

## BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ A 2.0 minimum G.P.A.
- ✓ A minimum of **145** total community service hours, with:
  - At least **45** United Way-aligned service hours
  - General Volunteer Hours (*no minimum*)
  - Maximum number of hours allowed **for service outside of Pierce County** is **100** hours

## UNITED WAY ALIGNED HOURS (45 hours minimum)

What counts as United Way-aligned hours?

- Hours must be completed through a nonprofit (501c3), government agency, school or faith-based organization that is aligned with United Way of Pierce County's strategic initiative areas (see information under **Breaking the Cycle** below)
- Hours must benefit the Pierce County community (*some service hours outside of Pierce County may still qualify under General Volunteer hours*)
- Hours with a United Way-managed program or project:
  - ✓ Hours with a volunteer project coordinated by United Way
  - ✓ Youth United volunteer projects

## Breaking the Cycle

United Way of Pierce County is committed to one big goal: breaking the cycle of poverty in Pierce County. This is the goal that will guide our work into the future, and it will define the measures of our success. United Way continues our long tradition of making investments in our community but with the focus on achieving specific outcomes that will result in Strong Families, Successful Kids and Connected Communities.

### Strong Families:

Programs and services focusing on supporting financial stability and support services to families (*like Centers for Strong Families or Volunteer Income Tax Assistance preparers*).

### Successful Kids:

**Strong Start** - Programs and services focusing on supporting children 0 – 5 years of age with kindergarten readiness. Activities include volunteering with preschool programs providing educational and/or enrichment

activities (like the Children’s Museum of Tacoma), organizations focused on child health (like Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital), and organizations providing parent and caregiver support.

**Early Grade Success** - Programs and services focusing on ensuring children are reading at or above grade level and preventing summer learning loss by providing educational and/or enrichment activities for children. This includes activities such as reading/tutoring/mentoring children, coaching younger children in sports, volunteering with summer camp/school programs, etc.

### Connected Communities/Basic Needs:

Programs and services that make up the critical safety net of services, opportunities and supports for individuals and families in need while moving them from crisis to stability. This includes activities such as working at food banks, shelters, clothing banks, donation drives benefitting these areas.

**A sample list of organizations aligned under each area is available at [www.uwpc.org/varsity-letter](http://www.uwpc.org/varsity-letter).**

This is **not** a complete list of organizations in Pierce County, but it gives a better idea of the types of organizations and opportunities available to meet the United Way-aligned hours requirement.

## GENERAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

United Way of Pierce County seeks to recognize volunteer service that benefits the residents of Pierce County. For this reason, the 2016-17 Varsity Letter in Community Service application has a cap on the number of hours served outside of Pierce County at a 100 hour maximum. There is no maximum limit for the number of volunteer hours served in Pierce County or for organizations that serve Pierce County (i.e., Northwest Harvest is located in So. King County but serves food banks throughout Pierce County). Additionally, all hours submitted for the Varsity Letter in Community Service **MUST** be **over and above** what is required for graduation, a class, school credit, or homework. ALL volunteer work **MUST** be served with or benefit a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, government agency, school or faith-based organization.

What are some examples of general volunteer work that counts but doesn’t fall into the United Way-aligned category?

- Hospitals (with the exception of working with children’s programs)
- Non-profit animal services (i.e. Tacoma Humane Society, animal shelters)
- Any healthcare/illness related non-profits (ex. American Cancer Society, the Heart Association, the Lung Association, etc. – with the exception of working with children’s health organizations like March of Dimes)
- Non-profit environmental agencies (ex. CHIP in!, Puget Creek Restoration Society, Forterra, general park cleanups)
- Senior Centers/Assisted Living Non-Profits
- City beautification projects (i.e. Paint Tacoma Beautiful)
- Museums
- Veterans services (Washington Soldiers Home, American Lake VA, etc.)
- Sports related community service hours (at a recreation-based non-profit, like SkiForAll or Equest Special Riders)
- Mission Trips (see “Church-Related Service Guidelines for more info) – **up to a maximum of 100 hours served outside of Pierce County**

## **CHURCH-RELATED VOLUNTEER HOURS**

Many of the hours served with your church/faith community may be counted under United Way-aligned hours or General Volunteer hours depending on the type of service activity. Please read the guidelines below carefully.

### **CHURCH-RELATED SERVICE GUIDELINES:**

The following hours WILL COUNT towards the Varsity Letter service requirements:

- Church-related hours serving the community at large (*meaning must serve more than the church congregation*)
  - ✓ Church hours that will count toward the Varsity Letter must benefit the external community of the church, for example:
    - volunteering with a church-run food bank, clothing bank or congregate meal service (*United Way-aligned volunteer service under Basic Needs*)
    - volunteering with church members for an outside nonprofit (501c3) community-based organization (*like running a youth group food drive for FISH Food Banks*), or
    - performing volunteer service on a mission trip (*like rebuilding a community after a disaster, building a school, digging a well, etc.*) that is not solely based on evangelizing/proselytizing (*general volunteer service hours **up to a maximum of 100 hours served outside of Pierce County***).
  - ✓ Volunteering with a church's Vacation Bible School program that is open to the community at large will count as United Way-aligned volunteer service under Early Grade Success – providing education and/or enrichment activities for children over the summer.

The following hours WILL NOT COUNT towards the Varsity Letter Hour requirements:

- ✓ Church hours that benefit only the congregation of the church will not count toward the letter, for example:
  - *Volunteering in the church choir, band, or performances*
  - *Volunteering to usher in church*
  - *Volunteering in the church nursery during services or classes*
  - *Volunteering to doorbell, proselytize, run a booth to pass out church information, etc.*

## **SCHOOL-RELATED VOLUNTEER HOURS**

There is no specific hour requirement for school-related activities; however, you may volunteer through your school or a school group. **Any school-related service activities must be focused on serving the community at large, not just the school/student body, to count toward the Varsity Letter in Community Service.**

### **SCHOOL-RELATED SERVICE GUIDELINES:**

For school-related service, the following highlights what will and will NOT count toward the Varsity Letter program:

- School-related hours if not serving the community at large (*must serve more than your school/student body*) **will not count**, for example:
  - ✓ Volunteering in the concession stand for a school sporting event (*unless the proceeds benefit a nonprofit (501c3) organization*)
  - ✓ Making posters for a school activity (*however, making posters for an activity that benefits a nonprofit (501c3) organization would count, like making posters to promote the March of Dimes walk*)
  - ✓ Holding a car wash or other fundraiser that benefits a school club or sports team (*if the proceeds benefit a nonprofit (501c3) organization, the hours would count*)
  - ✓ School club hours do not count for general business/meetings (*however, time spent planning and participating in volunteer service benefitting the outside community will count*)
  - ✓ Performing with your school band/orchestra/pep band/theater group or choir (*except as listed below*)
  - ✓ Hosting students from other schools or international exchange students
- School-related hours serving the community at large (*serving more than your school/student body*) **will count**, for example:
  - ✓ Volunteering with a school-based club by organizing a school food drive and donating proceeds to a nonprofit (501c3) community-based food bank
  - ✓ Performing with your school choir/band/theater group for a senior center, nursing home, daycare, etc. outside of school hours and not for school credit
  - ✓ While performing sports management duties does not count toward the varsity letter, managing or coaching younger teams of students in junior high or elementary school will count as UW-aligned hours under education and enrichment activities for children
  - ✓ Volunteering with a lower level school (junior high or elementary) helping teachers or students with education and enrichment related activities will count as UW-aligned hours

### **ADDITIONAL SCHOOL-RELATED GUIDELINES**

- ✓ School hours must be BEYOND what is required for graduation, a class, credit, or homework.
- ✓ For SOTA/SAMI students, hours completed through Mini Term will NOT count – only hours that are above and beyond the general internship/volunteering minimums set by the school.

# VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE FAQ

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## **I volunteered on a mission trip through my church, 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: 15 hours per day*

**Up to a maximum of 100 hours of service served outside of Pierce County.**

*If you have documentation proving that you served more than these hours per day, you may submit it with your application and will be credited with these hours if we are able to verify them with your provided contact (with the maximum of 100 hours being counted toward the Varsity Letter).*

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

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

*During the school year: 10 hours per day*

*During the summer: 15 hours per day*

*If you have documentation proving that you served more than these hours per day, you may submit it with your application and will be credited with these hours if we are able to verify them with your provided contact.*

## **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. ALL hours are subject to your supervisor's discretion.*

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

*Typically, you are able to earn a sports management letter if you volunteer with a varsity level team, so these hours do not count. If your time is spent with younger students (i.e., you are in High School helping with Junior High or you are in Junior High helping with Elementary students), or a community sports group, your hours will most likely count. Please email us if you are unsure.*

## **Can I count my time babysitting or helping with yard work or house work?**

*No, this work would not count unless these activities are performed through a nonprofit (501c3) organization that runs a program providing this support to low-income individuals/families.*

## **I have to complete community service hours so that I can graduate, can I count these hours towards my Varsity Letter?**

*Any community service or volunteer hours done to meet a graduation requirement DO NOT count toward your Varsity Letter in Community Service. Volunteer hours that are counted for the Varsity Letter are to be done above and beyond what is required for graduation. If, for example, you are required to complete 20 hours of service as part of your project but you complete 30 hours, then we will only be able to count 10 of your hours toward this distinction.*

### **I have to complete community service hours for a class, can I count these hours?**

*Any community service or volunteer hours done as a requirement for a class, DO NOT count toward your Varsity Letter in Community Service. Volunteer hours that are counted for the Varsity Letter are to be done above and beyond what is required for a class.*

### **I participated in Nurse Camp. Can I count these hours?**

*There is a volunteering component to Nurse Camp but you cannot count all of your hours spent at camp. You may only count the actual hours you volunteered while at camp.*

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

*No, hours spent performing a job shadow does not count for this award, even if it is with a non-profit or school organization.*

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

*Unfortunately, no you cannot. If the company is not a non-profit organization we cannot count these hours. This includes many childcare facilities that are not non-profit organizations. Be sure to check with the organization you are volunteering with ahead of time to ensure they meet the guidelines.*

### **I volunteered with my family. Can my parent be the contact for my verification of hours?**

*Unless your parent works for the organization you volunteered with, you may not have your parent sign off on 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, please have someone unrelated to you as your contact.*

### **I volunteered as part of a political campaign, do these hours count?**

*No, United Way of Pierce County is a nonpartisan organization and cannot count hours spent volunteering as part of a political campaign.*

### **Our family hosted a student from another school or an international exchange student. Can I count any of the hours spent with this student?**

*While hosting a student is a valuable experience for the host family and the student, hosting a student is not a volunteer activity that benefits the community as a whole, so these hours will not count toward the Varsity Letter in Community Service.*

### **Who do I contact for more information?**

*If your college/career counselor at your high school cannot answer your questions, feel free to contact Youth United staff at [youthunited@uwpc.org](mailto:youthunited@uwpc.org).*