

DECA Inc.

Community Service Programs

Young people and communities today seem to be pulling farther apart—just when they should be pulling together. During the critical years in the development of values, ethics and concern for others, too many of our young people are missing out on the satisfaction and learning experience, as well as the personal growth, that comes with being involved in their community environment.

DECA recognizes the importance of encouraging this connection with civic life and has developed key programs designed specifically to address the need for this kind of learning. These programs are action-oriented, designed to involve every student member and engage them as leaders in strengthening their communities. DECA programs, its Community Service Project, its Public Relations Project and its Learn and Earn Project, among others, provide the resources, training, support and recognition that this aspect of professional and personal development requires.

DECA sees our young people as community assets and, inversely, our community as a resource for youth—a resource that can help enrich classroom learning. Involvement in the service experience empowers our students, teaching them to look beyond themselves and inspiring them to improve the world around them—to develop a civic consciousness. It leads to recognition of the members' talents and skills by the community and by the students themselves as it creates a personal sense of purpose. Community involvement builds a valuable network of contacts and support for the student, the chapter and the school.

DECA programs are designed to take community service beyond simple “volunteering” to the learning and implementing of life skills. Community service projects provided by DECA can have a significant effect on any member's skill levels in organization, time management, decision-making, problem solving, communication, persistence and the ability to synthesize information. In other words, members acquire not just enriched attitudes and experiences, but the preparation to take their place as confident, contributing adult leaders in business.

DECA community service programs are designed as intentional learning environments:

1. Programs are deliberate and **goal-centered**, allowing for the individual interests of the participants and taking into consideration their **diverse talents** and skills.
2. Program activities are **knowledge-centered** with guidelines to provide relevant knowledge.
3. Program activities provide a range of competencies and **life skills** that are **measurable** and have meaningful outcomes.
4. Programs offer a **repeatable** cycle of planning, practice, and performance.
5. Programs offer opportunity for **feedback, evaluation** and **recognition**.

6. Program activities feature youth leadership, direction and **responsibility**—with **personal attention** via advisor guidance as needed.
7. Program activities build on members' strengths, taking a **positive approach**.
8. Programs encourage reaching out both **to give** to the community and **to learn** what the community can offer its leaders.
9. DECA community service programs build **partnerships** between students, teachers, schools, businesses, and community.

Who benefits from DECA community service learning?

Students Benefit

Community service programs such as DECA's can:

1. increase **retention**,
2. provide quality education,
3. show the **relevancy** of education to life in the real world,
4. enhance the amount of **personalized** education students receive,
5. teach **positive values**, leadership, citizenship, and personal responsibility,
6. empower students as **learners and teachers**, as achievers in areas not associated with competition,
7. invite students to become **active** members of their own community,
8. teach job skills and prepare students for **college and careers**, and
9. prepare students for living and actively participating in a democracy with a **free enterprise economy**.

Schools Benefit

DECA's community service focus is part of a turnkey program package for marketing education teachers. DECA programs are thoughtfully constructed to allow students to use their academic skills to serve the community. DECA guides the educator in facilitating a program by providing training, student activities, support and evaluation tools, as well as student awards and recognition. It encourages educators to be innovative and creative in their teaching.

Approval and implementation of a community service or service learning component by the school contributes to its outreach efforts in the local community, the state and beyond, and increases future campus/community collaboration and partnerships. It showcases schools, teachers and students in a positive manner at the same time that it highlights the contributing effects of the marketing education department and its mission.

Communities Benefit

DECA community service programs help with community education and contribute to thousands of hours of service (saving hundreds of thousands of dollars to people in need, as well as to nonprofit agencies, private sector companies, and non-governmental and governmental agencies of the community. According to a study by non-profit group Independent Sector, the current estimated dollar value of a single volunteer hour is \$17.19. The time put into communities because of DECA community service programs is invaluable to economy, leadership, and

general goodwill. Such programs raise the public's awareness of the importance of marketing education and help to instill community pride in schools and young people.

Businesses Benefit

Why do small businesses and major corporations (including DECA's National Advisory Board members) care about social responsibility and DECA? First, businesses of all sizes are coming to understand that being a contributing member of the community makes good business sense. Frank Walker, chairman of the Walker Group, a market and opinion research firm, has pointed out that "a strong reputation, built through good citizenship and corporate responsibility, is and will continue to be the trump card for organizations that plan a leadership position in the 21st century."

Corporate America is placing a great value on employee volunteer programs as a resource for achieving strategic business goals. Eighty-one percent of companies surveyed by the Points of Light Foundation in 1999 connect volunteering to their overall business strategies, compared to only 31 percent who did so in 1992. What's more, respondents to the survey unanimously agreed that corporate volunteering helps create healthier communities and improves a company's public image; 97 percent say these programs improve employee teamwork. Furthermore, Business for Social Responsibility, a San Francisco-based non-profit organization, reports U.S. research showing that one third of large U.S. companies had formal time-off policies in support of employee volunteer involvement, and their scan of additional research on release time policies reveals that 40 percent of medium and large-size companies in the United States offered paid leave time policies as of 2003.

Another reason business care is because they have come to know and trust DECA as a conduit between business and the classroom. Such a connection is valuable to businesses in that it provides an opportunity to share information about what specific skills employees need to have in today's marketplace. The DECA connection is an avenue allowing businesses to have an influence in the training of tomorrow's workforce. DECA also helps businesses become directly involved in the local classroom by providing them with the chance to mentor, coach, provide guest speakers and serve as competition judges.

In a national survey, 83 percent of the companies responding said they use volunteering to provide training for employees, and 97 percent acknowledged that volunteering builds teamwork skills. Sixty-eight percent of respondents agreed that employee volunteering helps the company keep valued employees, and 58 percent felt that employee volunteering leads to increased productivity.

Opportunities for personal and professional growth provided by volunteer activities encourage characteristics that improve creativity, teamwork and trust as well as employee retention, profile raising, innovation and the testing of new managers. DECA helps provide community volunteer opportunities for young people, and those opportunities translate to better employment skills.