

Every College-Bound Student Needs To Help You Serve

You need young blood—and their parents. They need you even more to get required service hours for college.

Every high school student in Florida needs 100 hours of community service to qualify for the Bright Futures scholarships. They need community service hours to be a finalist for the Lions scholarships. But counselors tell me they have a hard time finding useful volunteer projects.

Finding menial jobs such as cleaning alongside highways may beautify the landscape or recruiting their help to serve lunch at our meetings may serve us, but it doesn't teach them anything about the real reason we are Lions. We need to let them serve beside us on meaningful projects. It doesn't matter if they are our "normal" projects nor that we don't have our own members to supervise. High school clubs will provide supervision. Or you can offer to provide supervision at one of our events.

The first step is to write an email to the high school guidance counselors' department of every middle school and high school in your area. Suggest that your club be a community partner and tell them you will help create service projects and provide certificates of service. It's important that we are a non-profit volunteer organization for the students to qualify for the service hours they need. Send a "Help Wanted" to the school newspaper and web site.

Provide a list of projects they can help with: white cane days, eyeglass collections, shoes for the Conklin Center project, diabetes walks, book collections, or the peace poster contest. Create a "Leaders of the Future" training event and offer certificates.

Also agree to co-sponsor events they would like to do. Suggest they start an anti-bullying campaign (we have lots of materials from Lions Quest on how to do this). Or have them throw a party for elementary school students with disabilities—or a reading project. We can come up with projects they can do with Key Clubs (yes, I know that's Kiwanis)—but it doesn't matter. The students earn the hours and both non-profits get the benefit of youth in service and an increase in numbers. That's true for every church youth group, too.

Once the students' parents help their children to do the Lions projects, we increase our awareness in the community and can help recruit those folks for our clubs.

This is a win-win for your Lions Club—and for those students just waiting to serve with you. I'm here to help, too, as MD co-chair for children and youth. drlynnhawkins@aol.com.