Service & Learning... Why is this important?

Through service people can encounter new situations they have never been put in before. Such situations can assist volunteers in learning more about the differences that exist between individuals, learn more about themselves, and gain greater insight into societal issues that exist within our communities. Service is not a one way street and a charity action where those more privilege assist those less privileged. Instead service is about becoming connected to the community and learning from the service experience in order to gain further insight into community issues.

However, this learning does not just occur by volunteering at a service site. Reflection and critical analyzing of the content presented is an integral part of learning and all professors require students to participate in some form of reflection within classes through homework assignments, papers, and in class discussions. So in order for students to learn from service reflection needs to happen.

Follow the following steps and you can assist members of your organization learn more from the service projects they are a part of.

1. Engage service participants in a pre-reflection activity. Have them think about their
   
   a. Current awareness about the community issue directly related to the service project
   
   b. Expectations of what they will experience during the service project
   
   c. Inform students of some of the sensitive issues they may encounter regarding the service project and ask them to share their thoughts about that issue

2. Engage service participants in the planning of the service with community members. This allows more people to understand the importance of the service and will encourage more genuine service efforts

3. Require participants to actively work with community members and engage with them during the service project so they can make connections with members of the community and put a face along with the issue at hand

4. The more continuous the service, the more opportunity for participants to learn from the experience. For service experiences that last past one interaction, encourage students to engage in continuous reflection such as journaling.

5. After the service project, gather students together to reflect on the experience. If possible gather together with community members to gain more of the perspectives on the service experience.

See additional resources for reflection question suggestions, and for ways and formats to facilitate reflection

CWRU Greek Life Office: Service Learning Reflection