

Community Service Program Overview Class of 2012

Why does Mercy High School Require Community Service?

Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, dedicated her life to working with those less fortunate than her. She required those working with her to perform service for others. In honor and emulation of her, the program at Mercy High School:

- Believes that community service is a fundamental component of the mission of the High School, and it is deeply rooted in our tradition;
- Expects students to “go out into the community” to help those who are in need: children, the poor, the elderly, the abused, the homeless, those whose rights have been compromised, etc.; and
- Encourages students to make volunteerism part of their ongoing lifestyle, not only because it transforms society, but because it develops their talents and enriches their spirits.

What are the components of the Service Requirement?

During freshman and sophomore years, students complete a specified number of “Mercy service hours” at non-profit organizations whose mission is dedicated to serving needy and/or disadvantaged people. These hours can be completed during the academic year, vacation time, or summer months. Students work to directly support people in need (e.g., the homeless, the sick, the poor, the elderly, the disabled, or the disenfranchised.)

- Before the beginning of sophomore year, a student must complete at least 20 Mercy hours.
- Before the beginning of junior year, a student must have completed a total of at least 50 Mercy hours (which include the 20 she did before the start of her sophomore year.)
- Before the beginning of senior year, a student must have completed a total of at least 100 hours (50 of which are in direct contact with disadvantaged people), or a senior culminating project (see explanation below.)

Students must complete the green “Community Service Form” and submit it to the Community Service Office, after they have completed their service with the organization. If they are serving there for an extended period of time, they should submit a different form at the beginning of each new semester. Sometimes teachers or club moderators incorporate community service into their classes or events. Those hours count toward the students’ community service requirement.

Senior Culminating Project

During their junior year, students are given the option of beginning to plan their “senior culminating project.” This project calls upon upper-classwomen to tap into their interests and talents, and create projects that has realizable goals and serves disadvantaged people. Examples include: offering a cooking class to low-income senior citizens, teaching inner-city children how to ride bikes, making a play with disabled people, etc. Students may work individually, in pairs or in small groups.

Senior culminating project expectations:

- Involvement of at least 14 hours in direct contact with people;
- Completion during the summer between junior and senior years, or during the first semester senior year; and
- A presentation of the project at an assembly early in the second semester of their senior year.

Where can Mercy students do their service?

Students must provide service which meets the following requirements:

- Service is voluntary;
- Service is offered in a federally recognized non-profit organization (“501c3”);
- Service is with an organization whose mission is dedicated to serving disadvantaged people; and
- Student volunteers in direct contact with the disadvantaged people.

Freshmen are given a list of dozens of sites for Mercy service hours which have been pre-approved by the community service office. This list is also available on the community service link to Mercy’s web-page, and hard copies are available through the community service office. We encourage students to volunteer in direct contact with disadvantaged people at one of these pre-approved sites.

Students wishing to serve in an organization which does not appear on the list of pre-approved sites are strongly encouraged to seek approval from the community service coordinator prior to beginning service there. Service will be accepted to meet the graduation requirement if and only if it meets the above-listed criteria.