

How Selfless Are Our Good Deeds?

- Abby Schalck

Given that it is the holiday season, people are often more conscious of being kind to others. Many people participate in food or clothing drives for the less fortunate, or donate their time to soup kitchens. These good deeds are wonderful to do, even when it is not during the holiday season. However, it is important to stop and think about why you are doing them, and if it is for the right reason.

If you are selflessly taking action to help those in need simply because you know that it is the right thing to do, then you are all set. Unfortunately, a very small amount of people have this way of thinking. Numerous people often take part in things such as fundraisers or food drives simply to make themselves look better to others. A major part of this comes from students trying to get in community service hours. The National Honor Society requires students to participate in a certain number of community service hours in order to become a member, and some high schools expect students to accumulate a certain number in order to graduate. This seems good in theory; after all, it means that students will be helping the community, or giving back to those in need. However, it also raises the question: Would these students give back on their own if not prompted with a reward?

The answer to this question varies from person to person, but for the most part, it is thought that humans are inherently selfish. Therefore, it is conceivable that most people would not give to others if there were not some sort of reward for their work. However, one can pose the counterargument to this and ask: What's the problem with being selfish, as long as you help those in need? For example, if a student were to donate his time at a soup kitchen simply to get his required community service hours, he would still be helping people less fortunate than him. Looking at it from this perspective, it is a win-win for both the student and those he serves at the soup kitchen. So then what's the big deal?

In short, it is no big deal at the moment. Yet, what would happen if there were not a reward for helping others? Would people stand up and help each other regardless? Or would those in need of a little extra help never get any? If they would not receive any help because of our selfishness, how can we change our actions to ensure that they can get the help they need?

The answer is to remember that not everything needs a reward for it to be important and meaningful. When participating in fundraisers or food drives, remember not to think of yourself, but, instead, to think about those whom you are helping through your good deed.