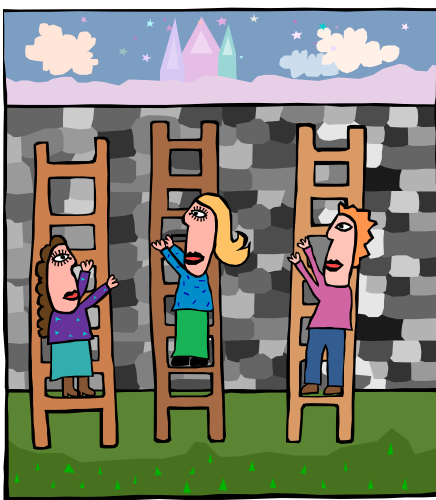


Part Five: Ending Your Service

The way in which you conclude your service can possibly be more critical than how you performed the service itself. Providing appropriate closure for those with whom you serve and leaving the organization with something of value will insure that your investment in the organization will be long-lasting. Leaving abruptly without advanced notice or preparation, or not providing a promised “product” for the organization can not only leave the organization with a negative memory of your time with them, but could also have a negative effect on any individuals with whom you served.

Consider the following:

- If you are providing direct service with community members, particularly those from a vulnerable population (children, elderly, those with disabilities) it is **critical** that you prepare them for the conclusion of your time together, and pay particular attention to your last day together, so that you bring positive closure to your relationship.
- Don’t make any promises (i.e. that you will write, or visit, or continue to volunteer). Even if you *think* you will keep your promises, situations may change. That of course doesn’t mean that you can’t continue beyond the end of the semester!
- Children in particular can become extremely upset and disappointed when they grow attached to someone who then simply stops showing up. For many, that is the norm in their experience with adults. Don’t be the one who convinces a child that no adult can be trusted!
- If part of your service-learning assignment was to create a brochure, a web-page, do a community needs assessment, or provide some type of product or information that benefits the community, be sure to provide that information or product to the organization!
- If you had a final paper or project for the class, provide the agency with a copy and invite them to your presentation. This allows the agency to better understand the connection between the service you provided and your course. Even more importantly, your work may directly benefit the organization.
- End your service on a positive note. Community agencies can provide you with letters of reference and even open doors for job opportunities. If your service placement made a significant impact on you or if you feel greatly rewarded as a result of your service, be sure to share this with the agency. Not only will they appreciate the positive feedback, your comments could be helpful in their continual effort to justify their programs.



Once you have completed the specified requirements for your course you may choose, as many students do, to continue working with the organization as a volunteer. Whether you continue to stay for more practical experience or through a sense of personal civic responsibility, volunteering your time with a non-profit organization is a fantastic opportunity to give back to your community. If you continue to serve after the end of your service-learning course you will then be considered a volunteer of the agency rather than a CSULB service-learning student. Be sure to communicate that to the agency and clarify your new role with the organization.

“Students are enriched by the [service-learning] opportunity... Field experience represents a distinct turning point or epiphany in their lives.”

— Dr. Madding, *Communicative Disorders*