

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Olmsted County

903 West Center Street, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55902

**DEADLINE FOR
APPLICATION IS
March 1, 2025**

How to Submit Materials:

Email:

sonjas@uwolmsted.org

Mail:

United Way of Olmsted County
Attn: Sonja Sommerfeldt (VLCS)
903 W Center St Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55902

Questions?

Sonja Sommerfeldt
507-535-5509

sonjas@uwolmsted.org

Visit our website:

<https://www.uwolmsted.org/volunteer>



VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

United Way of Olmsted County partners with local high schools in Olmsted, Dodge, Fillmore, and Winona counties to recognize and reward students for their volunteer efforts in the community. Students who volunteer 100 or more hours of service in a year can earn their school varsity letter, similar to those earned in academics, arts, and athletics.

Applicants must meet the following basic qualifications:

- Be a student in grades 9-12 attending a school in Olmsted, Dodge, Winona, or Fillmore Counties during the 2024-2025 school year. Homeschooled students affiliated with a local school district are also eligible to apply.
- Complete at least 100 hours of community service from March 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025.
 - 60 hours must be completed locally
 - 40 hours must be non-school related volunteering
- All volunteer activities must be photographed or verified by the volunteer supervisor on organization letterhead.

Your application must be received by United Way of Olmsted County by March 1, 2025. Applications can be mailed, delivered in person, or emailed.

You will be notified via email by March 8, 2025 that your application has been received. You will be notified via email by April 1, 2025 of your award status.

United Way's mission is to unite people and resources to improve people's lives in our community. We fight for the *education, health, and financial stability* of every individual, and encourage students to volunteer in those three community impact areas.

United Way of Olmsted County is a community change organization that collaborates with partners, accelerates impact, and drives changes identified by community members. Because of this, we tackle the most pressing needs in our community, cultivate leaders to build a place where all people can thrive, and empower local residents to shape their future.

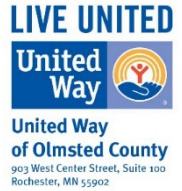
We also encourage VLCS applicants to volunteer with organizations whom we currently support. Those can be found here on the United Way of Olmsted County website:

<https://uwolmsted.org/meet-our-grantees>

United Way of Dodge County website:

<https://unitedwayofdodgecountymn.org/who-we-help/>

VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE APPLICATION



Deadline: March 1, 2025

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____

Expected Graduation Year: _____ High School: _____

Please choose one of the following options:

- This will be my first Varsity Letter
- This will be my second Varsity Letter
- This will be my third Varsity Letter
- This will be my fourth Varsity Letter

How many hours did you volunteer?

_____ Total number of hours served through school-related activities (at least one activity)

+ _____ Total number of hours served outside of school related activities (at least 40 hours)

= _____ Total number of hours served between 3/1/24 and 2/28/25 (at least 100 hours)

Student Demographics:

As a part of our ongoing efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion within United Way and the communities we serve, we are requesting that all Varsity Letter in Community Service applicants share race and ethnicity demographics to help UWOC better understand the racial and ethnic makeup of our community volunteers. *You are not required to complete the following two questions, nor is it a condition of approval for the Varsity Letter in Community Service program.*

1. What best describes your race? (select all that apply)

- Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian
- Black, African, or African American
- Native American, American Indian, or Indigenous
- White or Caucasian
- Multi-Racial
- Another Race
- Prefer not to disclose

2. What is your ethnicity? (select one)

- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino/a
- Prefer not to disclose

Student Agreement:

I attest that I performed the documented hours of community service on my application as included in the verification forms and met all requirements and qualifications as outlined by United Way of Olmsted County. To my knowledge, these hours are valid and count toward my earning the Varsity Letter in Community Service.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Agreement:

I hereby assign to United Way of Olmsted County all rights to video and audio recordings and all photographs of my child made in connection with Varsity Letter in Community Service activities. I hereby authorize editing, duplication, reproduction, copyright, exhibition, broadcast and/or other use and distribution of such recordings or quotations for purposes deemed suitable by United Way of Olmsted County. I also waive my right to approve or disapprove of finished products.

Printed Name (First and Last) of Parent/Guardian: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEER HOURS VERIFICATION FORM



DEADLINE: March 1 2025

A copy of this paper form must be completed for EACH agency (nonprofit organization, school, or club) for which you volunteered. (i.e. Submit one verification form with the total # of hours spent with Key Club and another for Channel One.)

For paper forms, duplicate this page as necessary. Additional copies can be found on our website.

Student Name: _____ **Total # of volunteer hours with this agency:** _____

Name of volunteer agency (nonprofit organization, school, or club): _____

Name and Title of Volunteer Supervisor at this agency: _____

**Sonja Sommerfeldt, Impact Program Coordinator, serves as your Volunteer Supervisor for United Way*

When did you volunteer? *Date(s) must fall between 03/01/2023 – 02/29/2024

Ongoing volunteer _____
Please list time frame

One-time volunteer _____
Please list specific date

This volunteer opportunity is: School related Non-school related (outside of school activities)

This volunteer opportunity supports: Education Health Financial Stability Other: _____

Briefly describe the community service you performed:

What have you learned about yourself through this volunteer experience?

What have you learned about your community through this volunteer experience?

Please verify your volunteer experience by completing ONE of the following options:

1. Submit a photo of this volunteer experience.

OR

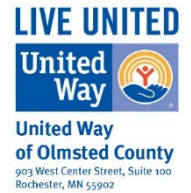
2. Submit a piece of organization letterhead signed by the volunteer supervisor.

To submit your photo(s) or letterhead(s), please do one of the following:

1. Email to Sonja Sommerfeldt at sonjas@uwolmsted.org

2. Attach copies to your paper application to be mailed to 903 W Center St, Suite 100, Rochester, MN 55902

VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS & RESOURCES



2024-2025 School Year

Required Volunteer Time

The Varsity Letter in Community Service Program recognizes students that volunteer 100 hours in one school year (served between 3/1/2024-2/28/2025). *With 52 weeks in a year, that is equivalent to about 2 hours per week.*

Qualifying Volunteer Activities

United Way's mission is to unite people and resources to improve people's lives in our community. We fight for the education, health and financial stability of every individual, and encourage students to volunteer in those three community impact areas.

What if my volunteer activity doesn't fit in the categories of health, education, or financial stability?

United Way of Olmsted County *encourages* volunteer opportunities in these specific areas of community impact. However, there are many local nonprofits within different areas. *Example* opportunities that would fall in the "Other" category include animal shelters, arts/humanities, business leagues, churches/religious organizations, and social/recreation clubs with 501(c)(3) status. Please check the appropriate box on your verification form. *If you are unsure whether a certain activity meets the volunteer requirements, please contact Sonja via email sonjas@uwolmsted.org or by phone (507) 535-5509 to verify *before you start*.

The following opportunities are *examples* of activities and opportunities that qualify for Varsity Letter in Community Service volunteer time. You may also use [Get Connected](#), United Way of Olmsted County's online volunteer portal, to find local volunteer opportunities and needs!

Type of Volunteerism	Education	Health	Financial Stability
<p>GENERAL examples</p> <p><i>What general types of volunteer activities are accepted?</i></p> <p><i>How can I help fight for education, health, and financial stability?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tutor/mentor/assist a teacher - Teach a language, an art, or another educational activity - Share your musical talent - Local library volunteer - Participate in a community service club - Donate activity kits with books, games, etc. - Visit a children's organization to read, dance, sing, color, puzzle, etc. - Volunteer at an event - Provide social media or IT support to a nonprofit org - Youth after-school programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer companionship to someone in assisted living or become a pen pal - Play games, cards or puzzle at a nursing home facility - Pick up litter or support a local public works effort - Volunteer as a coach or at a local sporting event - Volunteer at a medical center - Volunteer with a local farmers market or community garden - Help a local volunteer firefighter department - Personal hygiene collection drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help at a food bank, food shelf, or with meal/s for a family in need - Support those with disabilities to live independently - Snow removal, yardwork, painting, moving/packing, home projects and/or other household chores for seniors or disabled individuals - Serve a community meal - Sew blankets, pillows, etc. to donate - Host or help with a collection drive/fundraising event or organize one!
<p>SPECIFIC examples</p> <p><i>What specific programs are available to volunteer with in Olmsted County?</i></p> <p><i>What local programs support education, health, and financial stability?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living Room Tutors (virtual) - YMCA: Camp Leadership or Camp Oxbow (zoo trips, archery, building camp fires, tie dye, crafts, etc.) - Community Service Clubs: Key Club, National Honors Society, FFA, 4-H, Girl/Boy Scouts, etc. - Stewartville Sportman's Club - Sing, dance or perform at a local nursing home - MagiKids by Weirdcards: teach the game, start a club or organize a card drive - Brighter Tomorrows: activities with kids, talk-time with teens - Read to children at a United Way of Olmsted County event - History Center: outdoor work, admin tasks & special events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elder Network or Hiawatha Homes - RNeighbors annual: "A Litter Bit Better" - Adopt-A-Spot, (or a drain, stormwater pond, river, or highway) with your city Public Works - Participate in Volunteer Water Monitoring of Minnesota lakes & streams - Special Olympics MN coach or volunteer - Limb Lab's annual golf tournament - Rochester Farmers Market - American Red Cross - Stewartville Volunteer Fire Department - EA Therapeutic Health: explore the medical field through volunteering with a class or skills bootcamp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local food shelf or Channel One Regional Food Bank - Salvation Army: Resource room or food shelf attendant - Family Service Rochester's "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" - Project Linus, Bundles of Love, or Olmsted Medical Center: Craft, cut, crochet, sew, knit, iron, assemble or deliver infant essentials and/or materials; organize a collection - Habitat for Humanity: Volunteer at a Build Site or ReStore (retail) - Kiwanis, Exchange, or Lions Club fundraising events - In-Kind donation drive/s for Elder Network, The Landing, Family Promise, or Ronald McDonald House

VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

OPTIONAL

This Checklist is to help you ensure that your application is complete. *This does not need to be included with your application to be eligible.*

- I am a student in grade 9-12, attending a school in Olmsted, Dodge, Winona, or Fillmore county
- I completed at least 100 hours of community service (volunteer work) from March 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025
- At least 60 of my total hours are local (completed in SE MN region: Olmsted, Dodge, Winona & Fillmore counties)
- At least 40 of my total volunteer hours are non-school related activities with one, or more non-profit organization(s) with 501(c)(3) status
- I completed at least one school-related volunteer activity
- I am confident that my documented volunteer work is not being counted for graduation or class requirements
- All of my volunteer activities are photographed or verified by the volunteer supervisor on organizational letterhead
- I included verification forms (one form for each agency/organization) documenting all of the volunteer work that I would like to be considered for this award
 - Verification forms can be found on page 3 of the VLCS application or submitted [online](#)
- I have made a copy of my application and any/all verification materials for my future reference
- I have reached out to my mentor and/or the VLCS program coordinator at United Way of Olmsted County to have all of my questions answered
- I have completed and emailed my application + verification materials to sonjas@uwolmsted.org OR printed, mailed, and/or otherwise delivered all of my application materials to United Way of Olmsted County [903 W Center Street Suite 100, Rochester, MN 55902] by the March 1, 2025 deadline

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions about your volunteer work and how to count it.

Sonja Sommerfeldt

sonjas@uwolmsted.org

Impact Program Coordinator

United Way of Olmsted County

903 West Center Street

Rochester, MN 55902

(507)535-5509

VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. The requirements state that I must complete at least 40 hours in a “non-school activity”. What type of volunteer work counts as a non-school activity?

Volunteer work must be completed with a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) status. Listed on page 4 are just a few ideas; there are **many** ways to volunteer in your community. If you have further questions or need ideas, please visit Get Connected at: <http://volunteer.uwolmsted.org/>

If you're uncertain about whether volunteer work you're doing could be counted towards the Varsity Letter in Community Service award, please email sonjas@uwolmsted.org or call 507-535-5509 to verify before you start.

2. The requirements state that I have to complete at least one “school activity”. What types of volunteer work count as a school activity, and how many hours do I need?

The following is a list of activities that can be done in school. These are just a few ideas, not a complete list. Again, if you are uncertain if an activity counts, please email sonjas@uwolmsted.org or call 507-535-5509 to verify before you start.

- *Participating in a community service project through a school club (National Honor Society, Key Club, etc.)*
- *Assisting a teacher before, during, or after school, or during the summer*
- *Assisting at sporting events, concerts, theater productions (if not required for a class)*
- *Tutoring peers through a school tutoring program (If tutoring hours are performed, please list the school volunteer supervisor as the contact, not the tutee or the tutee's parent/guardian).*

There is NO hour requirement for school-related activities. Sometimes, work done through a school group can be counted as school related OR non-school related work. For example, if the work was done with an outside organization (e.g. Participating in Relay for Life as a Key Club member), you may count the hours where you need them.

3. Who should I list as my supervisor?

Your advisor is the adult supervisor, mentor, or advisor that has supervised your volunteer work and can verify that you volunteered with their group or organization. You MAY NOT list a student or peer as your contact supervisor.

4. I volunteered on a mission trip through my church, how do I count these hours?

The Varsity Letter in Community Service program targets volunteering locally in or near Olmsted County. If you volunteer on a mission trip or other volunteer vacation, the hours are calculated as follows:

- During the school year: no more than 10 hours per day
- During the summer: no more than 10 hours per day
- No more than 40 hours total outside Olmsted County.

5. I volunteered as a camp counselor; how do I count those hours?

The Varsity Letter in Community Service program targets volunteering locally in or near Olmsted County. If you volunteer as a camp counselor, the hours are calculated as follows:

- During the school year: no more than 10 hours per day
- During the summer: no more than 10 hours per day
- No more than 40 hours total outside Olmsted County.

6. I have to complete community service hours so that I can graduate. Can I count these hours?

Any community service or volunteer hours done to meet a graduation requirement DO NOT count.

7. I must complete community service hours for a class. Can I count these hours?

Any community service or volunteer hours done as a class requirement DO NOT count.

8. Can I count my time helping with yard work or housework?

Any yard work or housework performed with a qualified non-profit (such as Family Service Rochester's Neighbors Helping Neighbors program) CAN be counted for this award.

- In cases where you are assisting an individual on your own (not related to you or living in the same household) please photograph the experience and communicate with Sonja Sommerfeldt, Impact Program Coordinator at United Way of Olmsted County, about including her on your Volunteer Supervisor for that verification form.

9. I volunteered with a local company but wasn't paid for my work. Can I count these hours?

Unfortunately, no you cannot. If the company is not a nonprofit organization, we cannot count these hours. This includes many childcare facilities that are for-profit organizations. Be sure to check with the organization you are volunteering with ahead of time to ensure they meet the guidelines.

10. Who do I contact for more information?

Sonja Sommerfeldt, *Impact Program Coordinator at United Way of Olmsted County*
Email: sonjas@uwolmsted.org Phone: 507-535-5509

HELPFUL HINTS

- Remember to track your volunteer hours as you perform them.
- Use the optional checklist provided in your application to ensure your application is complete.
- Remember that United Way of Olmsted County must receive your application by March 1, 2025.
- For volunteer work spent with one group or organization, you only need to complete one verification form (paper or electronic) summarizing all of your volunteer work for the timeframe.
- Reach out to us if you have questions or need additional resources!