

# LIVE UNITED



## United Way of Olmsted County

903 West Center Street, Suite 100  
Rochester, MN 55902

**DEADLINE FOR  
APPLICATION IS  
March 1, 2024**

### How to Submit Materials:

#### Upload Online:

<https://uwolmsted.communityforce.com/>



[bit.ly/3qk9eNM](https://bit.ly/3qk9eNM)

#### Email:

[sonjas@uwolmsted.org](mailto: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](mailto:sonjas@uwolmsted.org)

<http://www.uwolmsted.org/vlcs>

## 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 or Dodge Counties during the 2023-2024 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, 2023 to February 29, 2024.
  - 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, 2024.** Applications can be mailed, delivered in person, uploaded online, or emailed.

You will be notified via email by March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 that your application has been received. You will be notified via email by April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 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/>

**OFFICE USE ONLY:**  
 LCS# \_\_\_\_\_  
 WS# \_\_\_\_\_  
 CALLS: \_\_\_\_\_

# VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE APPLICATION



**Deadline March 1, 2024**

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 3/01/23 and 2/29/24 (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 included in the verification forms and met all qualifications as outlined by the 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 any right to approve or disapprove the finished products.

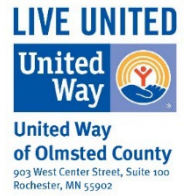
**Parent/Guardian First and Last Name Printed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

## VOLUNTEER HOUR VERIFICATION

**Deadline March 1, 2024**



**A copy of this paper form OR an [online verification entry](#) 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. For online entries, attach as many electronic verifications to your application as necessary.

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

**Name of volunteer agency (nonprofit organization, school, or club):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name and Title of Volunteer Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*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 \_\_\_\_\_  One-time volunteer \_\_\_\_\_  
*Please list time frame* *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. Upload electronically to your online application at <https://uwolmsted.communityforce.com/>
2. Email to Sonja Sommerfeldt at [sonjas@uwolmsted.org](mailto:sonjas@uwolmsted.org)
3. Attach a copy to your paper application

# VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

## VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

2023/2024 School Year

LIVE UNITED



United Way  
of Olmsted County  
903 West Center Street, Suite 100  
Rochester, MN 55902




### Required Volunteer Time

The Varsity Letter in Community Service Program recognizes students that volunteer 100 hours in one school year (served between 3/01/23 and 2/29/24). *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.

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

Type of Volunteerism	 Education	 Health	 Financial Stability
<p><b>GENERAL examples</b></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"> <li>- Tutor/mentor</li> <li>- Teach a language</li> <li>- Assist a teacher</li> <li>- Teach a form of art</li> <li>- Share your musical talent</li> <li>- Volunteer at your local library</li> <li>- Participate in a community service club</li> <li>- Donate activity kits with books, games, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Play games at a nursing home facility</li> <li>- Volunteer as a coach</li> <li>- Volunteer at a medical center</li> <li>- Pick up litter</li> <li>- Community garden</li> <li>- Be a pen pal</li> <li>- Help the volunteer firefighter department</li> <li>- Volunteer at a local farmers market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support those with disabilities to live independently</li> <li>- Help at a food bank</li> <li>- Snow removal or yardwork for seniors</li> <li>- Help with a collection drive/fundraising event</li> <li>- Serve a community meal</li> <li>- Sew blankets, pillows, etc. to donate</li> </ul>
<p><b>SPECIFIC examples</b></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"> <li>- <a href="#">Living Room Tutors</a></li> <li>- Key Club or National Honors Society community service</li> <li>- FFA, 4-H, Girl/Boy Scouts community service</li> <li>- <a href="#">YMCA</a> or other after-school youth programs</li> <li>- <a href="#">Stewartville Sportman's Club</a></li> <li>- Sing or perform at a local nursing home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RNeighbors "<a href="#">A Litter Bit Better</a>" annual event</li> <li>- <a href="#">Adopt-A-Spot</a> (rivers, highways, etc.) with Public Works</li> <li>- <a href="#">Special Olympics MN</a> coach or volunteer</li> <li>- <a href="#">Rochester Farmers Market</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Revolutionary Earth Farm</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">American Red Cross</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Stewartville Volunteer Fire Department</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Step up to SIT</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Local food shelf</a></li> <li>- Family Service Rochester's "<a href="#">Neighbors Helping Neighbors</a>"</li> <li>- <a href="#">Channel One Regional Food Bank</a></li> <li>- Donate blankets or sewn items to <a href="#">Olmsted Medical Center</a> or <a href="#">Project Linus of SE MN</a></li> <li>- Kiwanis or Lions Club fundraising events</li> </ul>

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

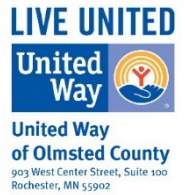
United Way of Olmsted County **encourages** volunteer opportunities in these specific areas of community impact. However, there are many local nonprofits within different areas. **Example** opportunities that would fall in the "Other" category include animal shelters, arts/humanities, business leagues, 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](mailto:sonjas@uwolmsted.org) or by phone (507) 535-5509 to verify before you start.

# VARSITY LETTER IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

## APPLICATION CHECK LIST

**\* OPTIONAL \***



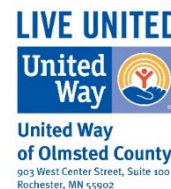
**This checklist is to help you ensure that your application is complete. This does not need to be included with your application.**

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions about your volunteer work and how to count it at <https://www.uwolmsted.org/volunteer> or 507-287-2000

- I am a student in grades 9 -12, attending a school in Olmsted County during the 2023/2024 school year, or a homeschooled student affiliated with the school district
- I included the student information page of the application with my signature and the signature of my parent/guardian
- I included paper OR electronic verification forms (page 3 of application OR submitted [online](#) – URL on first page) documenting all of my volunteer work that I would like considered for this award
- All of my volunteer activities are photographed or verified by the volunteer supervisor on organization letterhead and uploaded [online](#) or printed and sent in to UWOC
- I completed at least 100 hours of community service from March 1, 2023 to February 29, 2024
- I have at least one school-related volunteer activity
- At least 40 of my total hours are non-school related volunteer activities with one or more non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) status
- At least 60 of my total hours are local (completed in Olmsted County/SE MN).
- I have made a copy of my application and any verification materials for my future reference
- I am confident that my documented volunteer work is not being counted for graduation or class requirements

# 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, please email [sonjas@uwolmsted.org](mailto: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](mailto: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 house work performed with a 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 include Amy Wilfahrt, Advocacy & Engagement Coordinator at United Way of Olmsted County, as 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](mailto: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, 2024.
- 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.