

Teens and Screens: A New Era of Volunteering

Today, many people get sucked into the different forms of entertainment and algorithms their devices have to offer. Still, they are forgetting the most important aspect of being a human being: social interaction. Social interaction is how people react to each other, and because the latest technologies are always at our fingertips, an increasing number of people are beginning to forget the importance of connecting with others in their communities.

Because technology is slowly taking away the ability for people to have face-to-face social interactions with other human beings, it has become increasingly difficult for people to gain new perspectives through their own eyes and not through a screen. Today's teenagers are the victims of a generation where screens have always been available, and that is impacting their abilities to make new friendships, know their community, and be empathetic. Platforms like Youtube, TikTok, and Instagram are some of the most common apps teenagers have, and while they provide several perspectives on local issues, most viewers cannot understand what the direct impact is until they are part of the process.

One of the most common ways to be a part of the process and meet new people is through volunteering, but many people have forgotten that there are still opportunities to discover and see their community in a different light. For example, beach cleanups, volunteering at a local hospital, and serving soup at a soup kitchen are all experiences that offer a new perspective on the people and issues in a community. Volunteering has proven to cause an increase in happiness while also causing more meaningful relationships between members of a community. When young adults volunteer in their community, they gain insight on the problems that local people may have. This makes them aware of the world around them, where people face struggles that they will not otherwise hear about than through volunteering.

Volunteering is an opportunity that many people don't take advantage of, and because most young people are in school, they haven't had the chance to fully soak in the satisfaction that helping other people can provide. Several studies conducted by universities such as the University of Minnesota have proven that volunteering is beneficial for a person's mental wellbeing. Volunteering has to do with a person's wellbeing because it provides a sense of purpose, increases empathy, and allows for social bonds. Teenagers today are more disconnected from their communities than ever because of new technologies like cell phones, TVs, and social media that have intensified isolation. Reconnecting with people in their community can help teens have the ability to understand or imagine what someone else is feeling, which is the feeling of empathy. It may be difficult for teens to seek these volunteering opportunities, but they are at their fingertips. With the click of a button, there are thousands of volunteer openings made available, and each time one of those opportunities is taken, another door is opened within that opportunity. Volunteering for teenagers can open doors for scholarships and new opportunities, but most importantly, create a sense of self-worth and connection in a community. Although we may be stuck in a generation where screens and social media have taken over, there is still hope for the younger generation to take a break from the algorithms and empathize with the locals of their community.