



# UNITED WAY VARSITY LETTER

LIVE UNITED

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

**1. What does the \$25 application fee cover? What if a student can't afford that? Can someone sponsor a student?**

The application fee helps cover the cost of the school patch letter, pins, community service patch, project supplies and award packet. If you are unable to pay this fee, submit an explanation and financial need documentation with your application. We do accept sponsorships. In either case, contact [Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org](mailto:Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org) or call 973.993.1160, x603. Sponsorship checks can be made out payable to United Way of Northern New Jersey. Please indicate Varsity Letter in the check memo line and mail checks to:

United Way of Northern New Jersey, Attn: Varsity Letter Program  
P.O. Box 546  
Millburn, NJ 07041

**2. Program requirements call for 120 hours of volunteer service, including 30 hours of "United Way aligned service work." What type of volunteer work satisfies this requirement? How do I record and verify my hours?**

All volunteer work must be completed with a nonprofit organization that has a 501(c)3 status, a governmental entity, or a school organization, but at least 30 hours must be completed doing work that aligns with United Way of Northern New Jersey's work.

United Way will provide each participant with a Tracking Form to record all volunteer hours. All hours must be verifiable and supported with the signature of a supervisor.

Our United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community. And this hard work starts with helping those for whom this remains out of reach – our ALICE® and poverty-level friends and neighbors.

Despite working, **ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families struggle to afford the basics of housing, food, child care, transportation, and health care. United Way is working to remove the barriers that keep ALICE families from achieving financial stability.



United Way  
of Northern New Jersey

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Volunteer projects that are aligned with our work can be found online at either <https://www.unitedwaynj.org/varsity-letter> or <https://unitedwaynj.galaxydigital.com/> . In addition, see the following examples of projects that would also qualify:

- Hosting a food collection drive or stocking and distributing food at a food bank
- Creating a United Way Book Buddies story recording, collecting new or gently used children's books for donation, or acting as a volunteer tutor for a younger child
- Participate as a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program volunteer
- Creating online content for younger children (e.g. teaching a craft or skill, leading a fun activity, etc.) via YouTube, etc.
- Hosting a school supplies drive with United Way Tools for School, so that all children have the tools they need for success in school
- Act as a Student Representative for your high school with United Way's Varsity Letter program
- Become a Social Media Leader for the United Way Varsity Letter program
- Hosting a holiday gift drive for United Way's Gifts of the Season program, benefitting ALICE children
- Participate in Varsity Letter Fundraisers throughout the year

Check out United Way's Act for ALICE videos for some inspiration: <https://www.unitedwaynj.org/act-for-alice-videos>

**3. One of the requirements is to complete at least one "school activity." What type of volunteer work counts as a school activity? How many volunteer hours do I need for this requirement?**

See below a list of potential projects that would qualify as a school activity. There is not an hourly requirement for this activity. Sometimes work done through a school group with an outside organization can be counted (i.e. Key Club participating in Relay for Life). In such cases, students may count the hours where they are needed to fill requirements. If you are uncertain whether an activity would fulfill this requirement, please contact us.

- Attend United Way Varsity Letter meetings/learning opportunities – 3-4 times per year
- Participating in a community service project through a club (Honor Society, Key Club, etc.)
- Volunteering with a parent/teacher organization within the school or school district
- Assisting at sporting events, concerts, or theater productions (if not required for a class)
- Tutoring peers through a school tutoring program

**4. How do I count volunteering on a mission trip through my place of worship?**

If you volunteer on a mission trip or other volunteer vacation, the hours are calculated as follows:

- During the school year: 10 hours per day
- During the summer or school breaks: 15 hours per day

If you have a supervisor's contact and documentation proving that you served more than these allotted hours per day, you may submit it with your application. You will be credited the additional hours if we are able to verify them.

**5. How do I count hours served volunteering as a camp counselor?**

If you volunteer as a camp counselor, those hours are calculated as follows:

- During the school year: 10 hours per day
- During the summer or school breaks: 15 hours per day

If you have a supervisor's contact and documentation proving that you served more than these allotted hours per day, you may submit it with your application. You will be credited the additional hours if we are able to verify them.

**6. Can I count hours from club meetings?**

If you participate in a school service club, you may count any hours that are spent organizing and implementing a service project. If you are in a club that uses meeting times to discuss other club business, you may not count those hours. Only hours spent planning and participating in a service project will count as community service hours.

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**7. Can I count hours volunteering as a sports manager with my school's team?**

Typically, you can earn a sports management letter if you volunteer with a varsity-level team. If this option is available at your school, you will not be permitted to count sports management hours toward earning your Varsity Letter in Community Service. If your time is spent volunteering with a community sports group or with younger students (i.e. you are in high school and help with a middle or elementary school team), your hours will most likely count. Please contact us if you are unsure.

**8. Can I count my time babysitting or helping with yardwork or housework?**

Any babysitting, yardwork, or housework performed with a nonprofit CAN be counted toward this award. In cases where you are assisting an individual on your own, we require the individual have a documented need and not be related to you. To qualify, the recipient must meet at least one of the following criteria: Receive Medicaid or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. United Way will need to contact the recipient and verify they meet the criteria.

**9. Can I count volunteer hours needed to fulfill class or graduation requirements toward earning my Varsity Letter in Community Service?**

Any community service or volunteer hours applied to a class or graduation requirement DO NOT count toward your Varsity Letter in Community Service. Volunteer hours that can be applied toward earning a varsity letter are those that exceed the class or graduation requirements. If, for example, you are required to complete 20 hours of service to qualify for graduation, but you wind up volunteering for 30 hours, you can count the 10 additional hours toward earning your varsity letter.

**10. Can I count job shadowing hours?**

No. Hours spent performing a job shadow does not count for this award, even if it is with a nonprofit or school organization.

**11. Can I count volunteering with a local company where I did not receive payment?**

No. Volunteer hours must be completed with a nonprofit agency, government entity, or school.

**12. I volunteered with my family. Can one of my parents be the contact for verification of my volunteer hours?**

Unless your parent works for the organization you volunteered with, you may not have your parent sign off on your hours. You will need an alternative contact from the organization who can also verify your volunteer work. In this situation, it is preferable to have someone unrelated to you as your contact. If volunteer hours include virtual service, parent's signatures will be accepted.

**13. Can I count volunteering with an organization where I'm a member, i.e.: my place of worship/ Boy/Girl Scouts?**

Since you are a member, hours can only be counted when you are doing service with your organization for other people or an outside group, like a nonprofit. If your organization was hosting a food drive or spaghetti night that benefitted an outside agency, then hours spent setting up and collecting or serving food would count. However, hours spent benefitting the organization itself, such as singing in your church choir, setting up an event for your own Scout troop, ushering at your organization's event, etc., would not count. If you aren't sure, please contact us ahead of time.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

If you didn't find the answers to your questions above, please email [Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org](mailto:Rose.Twombly@UnitedWayNNJ.org) or call 973.993.1160, x603

