Dear Educator,

During this season of giving, we want to thank you for giving your time, compassion, encouragement, and expertise to our nation’s students. Your commitment to helping students achieve academic language proficiency is fundamental to their long-term success.

This month, we are proud to present you with a special reading about community service written by eighth grader Savana Hadjipanteli. “Giving Back to Our Community” tells the story of two students who learn about the importance of helping others.

This reading and all the readings in Grammar Gallery’s Reading Gallery reinforce the grammatical forms students are learning. “Giving Back to Our Community” highlights indefinite pronouns and is especially appropriate for students at Levels 3-4. All the Grammar Gallery readings teach students how to access academic content and introduce them to a wide variety of reading genres.

Warm wishes,

The Grammar Gallery Team
When Ms. Valery, my history teacher, handed out the latest assignment, everyone groaned. The assignment was the mandatory community service that everyone in sixth grade has to do. My friend Lily said, “Claire, can you believe they’re forcing us to do community service? What a waste of our time.”

I didn’t understand Lily’s discomfort with this assignment, or why anyone would have a problem with community service. It isn’t very hard, and it can be kind of fun when you get into it.

Unfortunately, Lily didn’t buy this rationale. Everywhere we went, Lily talked about how unfair it was that we were forced to help other people—people we don’t even know. Finally, on our way to English class, I stopped her ranting. I told her that it is our responsibility to help those in our community. The government can’t do everything, I explained. Lily finally gave in, but she couldn’t think of anything she could do to help the community. I suggested that we help out with our basketball team’s fundraisers. Lily and I love playing basketball, and the money we raised would allow us to buy new uniforms. As importantly, in just five hours, we could fulfill our community service requirement.
Once the basketball team fundraisers started, the community service opportunities came rolling in. First we sold chocolates for two hours. We sold chocolates to everyone—to our teachers, our families, and some of the people in the neighborhood. Someone even bought a whole case of chocolates! I thought the task was relatively easy to do and kind of fun, but Lily wasn’t as enthusiastic because she is shy around people. After selling chocolates, we then spent three hours working at the ticket booth of the basketball team carnival. Lily actually enjoyed this work, but I found it kind of boring, especially when no one came to the ticket booth for almost an hour. Even though we had fulfilled our requirement, I encouraged Lily to do one more hour of service at the library. We spent the hour reading books to young children in the neighborhood. I loved it, but Lily said it was the most boring hour of her life. I hope she wasn’t being literal! Lily and I completed our community service log, noting that we had done six hours of community service.

When I turned in my community service log and essay about the volunteer work I had done, Ms. Valery looked over the tasks I had completed. She said, “Claire, it’s wonderful that you are helping raise money for your basketball team, but that is not community service. Community service is work that doesn’t benefit you directly. The only hour that qualifies as community service is the hour you spent reading in the library.”
I was stunned. How could this be? *Nobody* told me that I couldn’t help my basketball team. Lily was furious, and I was very upset. I had to complete four hours of community service in the next few days, and I had no idea how to find people to help.

After school that day, I went home and told my mom what happened. As always, my mom offered a solution. She told me that our city has a web site that lists lots of opportunities for community service. However, it just so happened that my mom’s company was hosting a community service function over the weekend. *Everyone* from her office would be helping paint a school that was very old and run down. My mom said that Lily could come and help, too.

On Saturday, I woke up at eight o’clock in the morning. We picked up Lily and then drove to the school. I was shocked at what I saw. I could not believe that young kids were attending a school that was in such bad shape. It looked like the school had not been cared for in years. Before the work began, we listened to a speech about the clean-up effort at the school. I learned that the children who attend the school were excited people cared enough to help make their school a better place. They left thank-you notes for all of us. *Someone* suggested that Lily and I join a group that was painting the gymnasium. To our surprise, painting was a lot of fun. We used bright colors, and the gym looked so much better when we finished. Lily didn’t want to leave!

Even though there were some bumps in the road while I was doing this assignment, I believe that the experience was beneficial overall. I learned a lot while painting the school, like how to paint a house should I ever need to. I also learned that I am very fortunate to go to a school that is in such good condition. *No one* should be attending a school that is falling apart, and people *everywhere* need to make sure this isn’t happening in their community. Most of all, I’m happy that Lily is finally embracing the spirit of community service. I hope that this spirit of giving back continues throughout our lives. ♦
How Can You Help?

Many organizations offer community service opportunities for both kids and adults. If you want to donate your time, research non-profit organizations in your area to find out what they need. Here are some ways you can help those in your community:

- Pick up litter at a park or playground.
- Start a recycling program at school.
- Collect food, warm clothing, stuffed animals, or toys and deliver them to homeless shelters or your local police station or fire station.
- Make holiday cards, birthday cards, and notes for the elderly in assisted living facilities or children in hospitals.
- Donate old eye glasses to an organization that recycles them for the needy.
- Collect old clothes and donate them to a daycare or family shelter.
- Make a holiday basket for someone less fortunate.
- Send letters or care packages to men and women serving in the armed forces.
Savana Hadjipanteli is an eighth-grade student in Springfield, Virginia. She enjoys reading, science, traveling, technology, and movies. She also dedicates time each month to community service. Savana plans to study geology when she goes to college.
1. What is another word for “stunned” in the following sentence? I was stunned.
   - unhappy
   - confused
   - shocked

2. At first, what was Lily’s attitude about community service?
   - She thought that helping others would be fun.
   - She didn’t think it was fair that she had to help people she didn’t know.
   - She wanted to help paint a school.

3. Why didn’t the fundraising work that Lily and Claire did count as community service?
   - because it benefitted their basketball team
   - because they only worked for three hours
   - because their teacher didn’t think fundraising was important

4. What did Claire learn during this experience?
   - that children in her community have been attending a run-down school
   - that working at a ticket booth is fun
   - that teachers don’t like basketball

5. Choose the best word to complete this sentence: __________ in our class had to complete five hours of community service.
   - Anyone
   - Everyone
   - Everything
6. Write a paragraph answering the questions below. First, think about what you will write. Include details and examples. Write complete sentences. Check that you are using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Make your writing clear. Use two or more indefinite pronoun (anyone, everywhere) in your paragraph.

Do you think students should be required to complete community service as part of a class? Why or why not?

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