

Benjamin Steeper

Oh Sweet Nectar

To volunteer or not to volunteer, what a stupid question! Volunteering is an investment—an investment in time. Time is my most valuable possession. I liken it to a grande sized caramel apple spice tea from Starbucks. An accidental spill of this sweet nectar would be such a waste. Many believe that to volunteer with whatever heart is to spill their tea. This is a lie planted beneath the poisonous soils of misconception. There is not a more worthy cause with which to refill your cup, than that of volunteering.

There are people with caring hearts and people with indifferent hearts. With this in mind, one could choose to devote their entire life to helping others through volunteering, but if the heart is in the wrong place, it is like dumping their tea. Hence, the purpose of volunteering is less about completing a good deed, and more about enabling that good deed to complete you.

So I could tell you of the hours I spent scrubbing floors and painting church railings. I could tell you of when I laid cement or lugged heavy boxes full of cans to a room full of hungry people. I could even go on to tell you of the hours I spent amusing senior citizens with my fiddle or reading to them humorous poems from my book. But if I went to all these lengths only to convince you of how much I have done for other people, and I failed to explain how much they have unknowingly done for me, my words would be like a punctured cup, leaving a puddle of wasted tea. The more I have volunteered over the years the more I have come to the realization that the helper needs the helped, just as the helped needs the helper.

One brisk autumn afternoon, with violin case in hand, I stepped through the doors of a hospital. I was going to see Mr. Fisher. Since I was a young child I could remember sneaking out into the isle at church to catch a better view of Mr. Fisher plucking his banjo. He didn't know me too well, and my slipping into the isle usually went unnoticed. Yet here I was, raising my bow to serenade this godly man on his deathbed. When I finished my Minuet, however, he did not comment on my playing. Rather, he told me just how much he appreciated my smile. I walked out of the hospital that day realizing that all throughout my volunteering efforts, I had missed what mattered most: heart. When news came that Mr. Fisher had died, I cried. For it was not the good deed I completed that touched me; it was the effect that deed had on my heart.

Will you spill it or will you drink it? Will you complete the deed or let the deed complete you? As for me, I just can't wait to savor my grande sized caramel apple spice tea. I swear I won't spill a drop.