

VGGC Wins the President's Volunteer Service Award

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Volunteer GGC received a gold-level President's Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) for completing over 1821.5 hours of service during the 2015-2016 year. The award recognizes the VGGC's dedication to service and the students who give back to the community.

The PVSA was initiated by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). "It is a federal agency that serves 5 million Americans through more than 70,000 community and faith-based organizations."

The award arrived this January. It includes the honor of presidential recognition, a personalized certificate, an official piece of commemorative memorabilia, and a congratulatory letter from the president.

"It's nice to be recognized," Allen Clarke, Coordinator of Student Involvement at and the Student Center, said. "For me it was more about the fact that students were recognized for the fact that they do service."

"Whatever administration it is, I think it's great that students, especially young people, are required to really try to make a difference."

For members of VGGC, the award shows how far the organization has come. Clarke was the only employee when VGGC was founded in 2014. Since then, he has hired nine part time students. VGGC's staff has seen its number of volunteers double since 2014.

"Volunteer GGC is an innovative program that aids students with the opportunity to perform community service on campus and in neighboring communities throughout Metro Atlanta," the organization's GetInvolved page reads.

Besides planning its own events, VGGC facilitates volunteer functions for classes and Registered Student Organizations. It also provides network opportunities with the community. One of GGC's signature events includes Great Days of Service (GDOS), one of the largest community volunteer events in the nation. For the 2016 GDOS, more than 60 volunteers helped build scarecrows at GGC's Community Garden, which has donated more than 900 pounds of produce to the Lawrenceville Co-op Ministry this year.

Volunteer service is valuable to members of VGGC. The CNCS estimates that the average volunteer hour is worth about \$23 an hour.

"It really makes me feel humbled to think that GGC has so many people that are willing to give of themselves and contribute to service in a meaningful way on campus," said Janie Durham, a VGGC senior majoring in psychology.

"To have that award feels like... we didn't ask for any recognition, but since we have it, I think that brings recognition to the school and [lets us] know you [we] made a difference on a local level."

To Clarke, it is important VGGC finds ways to document students' volunteer service.

Durham discovered a passion for volunteering when she began working for VGGC two years ago. She admitted that, while she once thought she didn't have time to volunteer, she now looks forward to events like Junior Achievement, a program at the Discovery Center where volunteers work with middle school children as they learn about budgets and finances."

Clarke hopes to see VGGC expand more in the next year. He would like to see campus wide participation for signature events like the GDOS and MLK Days of Service. He also hopes to find new ways to document the service campus provides.

"I think in general, millennials get a bad rap, because of them caring," Clarke said. "I think students get a bad rep. Students are here to learn, but that's one of the learning environments created is for service, for helping your fellow man and for helping the community."

"I think that's one of the things that would be great, for them to tell their story."