

# The Unintended Consequences of Volunteerism: Positive Outcomes for Those Who Serve

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**SUMMARY.** With over one-half of all college students volunteering for community service activities and increasing numbers of colleges and universities moving towards a greater infusion of service-related learning experiences into the curriculum, it is important to understand the impact volunteerism has on those who serve. This paper presents the results of a qualitative study of the meaning and impact of volunteerism as described by experienced college student volunteers in a Head Start-based Family Literacy Project. Volunteers reported benefits in the areas of self-knowledge, academics, and social awareness. Positive outcomes in the areas of personal growth, self-esteem, and personal efficacy were noted. Service and traditional academics were viewed as mutually enhancing learning strategies; volunteering gave coursework more meaning and what was learned in the classroom increased the volunteers' effectiveness in the community. Increased awareness of impor-

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