Service Leadership: A Worthwhile, Lifelong Ideal

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When the question is posed, “What do you want to do with your life?”, I cannot think of a better response than, “I want to serve humankind. I want to develop my talents and abilities, acquire the information and values that will serve me in my chosen career, and then place these at the service of the human race.” If one chooses business, how wonderful it is to provide society with a high-quality product or service and to create new jobs. If one chooses law, how marvelous it is to contribute to the building of a more just society. If one chooses education, how commendable it is to help children prepare for their future. If one chooses medicine, how rewarding it is to bring health to the lives of others. Whatever the field, wherever one lives, whatever one’s age, being a leader in service to humanity is a noble and highly worthy ideal. In his book, *The 8th Habit*, Dr. Stephen Covey examines all of the current theories and approaches to leadership and recommends “service leadership” as the most worthy of all.

In the middle school, great efforts are made to provide opportunities for students (and parents) to experience the joy of community service and to come to the realization that “serving others” can be a very effective way of “nurturing the spirit” and even more rewarding than “being served by others.” Once a month students go to the Hogar Nueva Granada [serving children of adjacent LSES neighborhoods] where they are paired with a younger student with whom they engage in learning activities. On Saturday mornings middle school families come to the CNG campus where they offer educational activities of their choice to gifted and talented students from the Alianza Educativa schools located in the lower social-economic areas of the city. The National Junior Honor Society students carry out social service projects at the “Fundación El Portal” where the children of prisoners receive their education. Also, each year, the NJHS students visit the wounded soldiers at the Military Hospital near CNG providing them with entertainment, magazines, and/or snacks. During the Classroom without Walls trips, students engage in a service project with a needy school in the region. They might provide school supplies, paint a classroom, or help fix broken desks. Other projects have involved helping flood and earthquake victims both in Colombia and in other countries (it was middle school students who initiated an all-school project for helping the victims of the earthquake in Peru last year), building houses for the homeless, playing games with children dying of cancer, furnishing and supplying a small library in a public school in Usme, raising money to buy instruments for a school for the children of displaced families, recycling paper and plastic, and on and on. Over the years we have found that the more we involve students in service projects, the more they come up with their own ideas and want to lead their own service enterprises, hopefully, both now and throughout their lives.