

Emmanuel Christian School

Serve-A-Thon Questions and Answers

What is the Serve-A-Thon?

The Serve-A-Thon is a unique opportunity that allows our students to help raise much needed money for our school and for missions by raising support for their service projects. Students will go out into the neighborhood around the school and into the community and will perform needed services such as raking leaves, picking up trash, planting trees, and painting. Friends, parents and relatives pledge support.

Why raise money through a Serve-A-Thon rather than through candy or Christmas Card sales?

When students sell items to family and friends, adults often feel the pressure to buy items they might not actually need in order to help the student and/or school. In addition, the school often receives only 50% of the money collected. Through the Serve-A-Thon parents do not have to purchase unwanted items, there is no collection or delivery of items, and the school can use 100% of the money each student raises.

What will ECS do with the money raised through Serve-A-Thon?

The money raised will help us meet our operating budget for this year and support much needed school improvement projects. More than 90% of our operational cost is paid for through tuition, fees, and Emmanuel Baptist Church support. But every year we need to raise money for additional operating costs and special projects. The money collected through the Serve-A-Thon will help pay for: student computers and technology upgrades, instructional copying and printing, library books, annual academic testing, instructional media, materials and supplies for art, music, science, and physical education. In addition, 10% of what we raise through Serve-A-Thon will be used to help a school sponsored missions project.

Why are you raising money by doing community service?

The mission and vision of ECS is to “*prepare students for life as Christian servant-leaders who choose character before career, service above self, and a lifestyle of participation over apathy.*” The Serve-A-Thon will provide a platform for students to put the mission statement into action by performing acts of service for others.

Why are students being rewarded for serving in the community? Isn't building character something kids should practice without rewards?

The Serve-A-Thon rewards are not given for serving in the community. Community service is something our students are enthusiastically engaged in without any monetary reward. The rewards we give at Serve-A-Thon time are a thank-you for taking the time to help find donors who are willing to support our school financially. Because these are students, we feel it is appropriate and fair to reward them for helping.

How are Serve-A-Thon projects selected?

Our three goals for all ECS service projects are:

- 1) HANDS-ON: we want our students to be involved in doing projects with their own hands;
- 2) RELATIONAL: we want them to come into some kind of relational connection with those they are serving
- 3) MORE THAN MATERIAL: we want our students to do something beyond the collection of money or material goods to give away.

Working and doing for others is a positive demonstration of respect and support. It is a valuable doorway to opening a relationship with our students to those in the community and those in need.

Why is 10% of the money raised being donated to a school in another country? What is our relationship with this school?

The school we are helping through Serve-A-Thon is a Christian school with whom we have a special relationship. Every two years a group of high school students from Emmanuel travel to Belize to volunteer time and work at the school. The missionaries, the Rainey's, have developed a great relationship with ECS and its students. It is exciting for our students to travel to Belize and see first hand the difference their efforts and donations can make in the lives of these boys.

Community Service is great, but is there a danger of over-doing it? Doesn't it take away from academic time in the classroom?

The primary expenditure of time and energy is felt by parents and volunteers who plan and prepare for these community service activities. Most service projects are relatively short activities. The different grade levels will spend an amount of time appropriate to their age and abilities. Beyond these limits, it is difficult to say how much community service is too much. We realize that we are a school with very specific academic goals, and we take these goals seriously. But we also recognize that we have specific spiritual goals that take us beyond the written curriculum. We believe Christian character development is not just a matter of teaching more Bible lessons or more chapel messages, it's about the imitation of Christ. There are powerful statements in the scriptures about the importance of being "doers of the word and not hearers only" (Luke 6:46-49 and James 1:22-25). We believe that becoming a "doer" is a matter of training by doing, not just a matter of hearing more teaching. Finding ways to do this effectively within a rigorous academic program will prepare our students not only to be leaders, but also to be servants.

How can parents and volunteers get involved with the Serve-A-Thon?

We are always looking for new ideas to develop community service locally and internationally. Friends in the community can help us make these connections and ECS parents can become involved by suggesting projects and places to serve, helping to organize the events, and helping to supervise on the day of the event.