

Feel-Good Friday: Ohio's Whitmer High School Offers Practical Career Training, Volunteer Help

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By [Jennifer Oliver O'Connell](#) | 8:45 PM on May 12, 2023

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In so many ways we are raising generations of children who do not have practical skills. The fact that the career goal of many of these kids is to become a social media influencer reflects that we have set the bar low, as well as failed to instill in them the value of working with their hands, mind, and heart, as well as the value of service.

For this week's Feel-Good Friday, I spotlight a high school in Toledo, Ohio, that is seeking to change that. Christine Arvay has been a job coach with Whitmer High School for 14 years and spearheaded the Career Tech program there. Juniors and seniors are allowed to apply to the program, which gives students an opportunity to learn job skills, communication skills, and other practical and soft skills that they can use when they graduate.

“For us, we just want our students to be able to gain the skills that will help them later in life while giving back,” Arvay said.

Later in life. Another concept that is not being instilled in our young people: a healthy respect that what they do in the present will affect their future. There are all kinds of studies that show the prefrontal cortex of the brain is not fully developed until the mid- to late-20s in adulthood. This is the part of the brain that controls the ability to plan, prioritize, and use impulse control.

However, the teen brain is active and adaptive, and these skills can still be embedded through work ethic, repetition of life experiences, and by example: teaching them that diligence in the smallest acts will make them successful in the bigger acts, and giving them real world opportunities to put that into action. Sports does this well, and so does the practical life and career skills, and acts of service presented through the Whitmer career program.

For the month of May, Arvay and the Whitmer students have partnered with Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) in Toledo to perform tasks like cleaning, organizing, decorating, and sometimes even cooking for the residents of RMHC. Arvay built this relationship with the charity, which is going on 10 years now.

Bianca Martinez is a senior at Whitmer High School who loves volunteering at RMHC of NW Ohio. "I like volunteering at Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northwest Ohio because it allows me to try new things, experience Toledo, and help others," says Bianca. When asked why others should volunteer, Bianca told us that "Everyone should give back and help others because it makes people happy."

Not only people, but Bianca, too! Studies have shown that when we give to others and help others, we help ourselves as well.

That's not just some "good vibe" theory, either. There's science behind it. Research shows that giving can boost your physical and mental health in numerous ways. Let's find out more with psychologist Susan Albers, PsyD.

A smile isn't the only reaction that comes from gift-giving. There's also a chemical response that takes place in your body in response to ... well, just doing something nice.

As you help someone or give a gift, your brain secretes "feel good" chemicals.

Serotonin, the happiness neurotransmitter that regulates mood and cognition, Dopamine, that floods us with a sense of pleasure, and Oxytocin, the hormone that enhances our connection with others. Essentially, we were designed to feel good when we do good. Kind of cool.

"When we do things for other people, it makes us feel much more engaged and joyful," says Dr. Albers. "That's good for our health and our happiness."

When our young learn to cultivate and enjoy these types of highs, the artificial ones brought on by tech-induced psychosis, drugs, and other forms of anesthetization become less attractive. Watching the Whitmer High School students volunteering at RMHC, the joy on their faces and the sense of purpose is unmistakable and quite remarkable.

WATCH:

Feel Good Friday: Sprucing up and growing up <https://t.co/DJ1Mh24g7m>

— Jennifer Oliver O'Connell (@asthegirlturns) [May 12, 2023](#)

RMHC also received feedback from the other [students in the program](#):

Bianca is not the only one in this class, as other classmates volunteer with her at Ronald McDonald House Charities of Northwest Ohio.

Davon Brown is a junior at Whitmer High School who enjoys learning work skills and helping families at RMHC. “The job training and volunteering help me learn work skills. My favorite part about volunteering is my jobs and work, knowing that I am helping others,” says Davon. “It’s nice knowing that the safe and clean environment we help provide supports others in need.”

Another built-in lesson that teaches action and consequences. The act of providing a clean environment for the people at RMHC, whose children are battling cancers and other catastrophic illnesses, not only helps promotes their health and healing, but gives them a clean and safe environment in which to do so. Bianca Martinez, Davon Brown, and the other students of Whitmer High School are gaining valuable skills and lessons that they will be able to apply to any area of life, not just their future employment.

And their future employers will benefit from this and their work ethic. Win, win.

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