

The Complete Education Portal

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## Services

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# Service and Support Networks are Vital

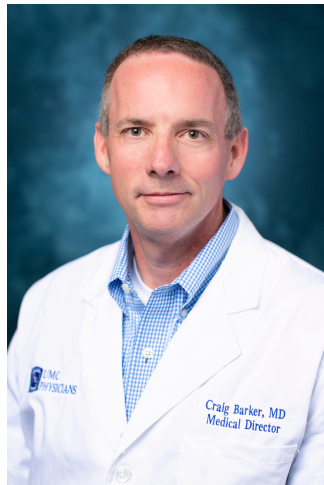


**Service-mindedness and community engagement are vital for youth, fostering compassion, character, and global understanding amid today's challenges.**

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In this year's Labor Day rally in Pittsburgh, USA, President Joseph Biden Jr. cited his father, stating, "A job is not about a paycheck; it's about dignity and community." This is a perfectly fitting message for youngsters, encouraging them to serve their communities.

The ongoing conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Middle East emphasize the need for compassion and a service-minded attitude. Lubbock-based physician Dr. Craig Barker stressed that, in addition to a service-minded attitude, a greater understanding of people's suffering is needed, while standing firm in one's beliefs. These attributes are not only necessary in professions like healthcare but are also vital in politics, administration, and law enforcement.



Dr. Craig Barker

**Service is Passion**

Generations Z and Alpha are tech-savvy and passionate about various fields such as digital creations, sports, music, and film. In some developed economies, interest in higher education is waning, and politicians are enacting bills to support vocational training and create job opportunities for non-college-educated youth. In such circumstances, social and soft skills become increasingly important. Engaging with and contributing to the community strengthens the resumes of job seekers. Parents and community leaders recognize the need for these skills and are focusing on equipping their children accordingly. If young minds are introduced to service and volunteering from middle school, they will be motivated to get involved. By engaging with the community beyond their circle of friends and family, they will develop a better understanding of the world—a much-needed attribute, as noted by Dr. Barker.

“I feel that serving others is something we were created to do,” stated Craig Barker, Chief Medical Officer at University Medical Center (UMC) Physicians, Lubbock. Even a small act can go a long way in helping those in need. Dr. Barker highlighted the “Night to Shine” event held across the United States as an example of community engagement. This event, organized as a prom for intellectually or otherwise disabled individuals aged 14 and above, has been a remarkable success in Lubbock. Community members donate suits, dresses, and shoes, and participants can “shop” for their special prom attire weeks in advance. On the night of the event, participants receive red-carpet treatment, a limousine ride, and food served by local volunteers. They also enjoy dancing, karaoke, shoe shining, makeup services, and more—all provided by local volunteers, including many university students and on-campus organizations.

Global events that highlight courageous and selfless acts inspire youngsters. Epidemics, conflicts, and social unrest, while often projecting a negative image, also showcase the tireless efforts of medical professionals, caregivers, paramedics, and voluntary organizations, serving as positive motivators. Special mention must be made of governmental organizations like WHO and

USAID, as well as non-governmental organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières. As this article was going to press, humanitarian efforts by relief organizations to vaccinate children against polio in Gaza were underway. While it is painful to witness the outbreak of polio, it is comforting to see organizations like WHO and medical professionals working tirelessly for safety. Young people observing these efforts are motivated to make a positive impact in the world. Parents, family members, teachers, and friends should encourage children from middle school onward to contribute to society while pursuing their dreams. Service comes in many forms, and any act of service empowers both individuals and society.

## **Community Engagement is Service**

As mentioned earlier, voluntary service can take various forms, building character and empowering society. Students and young people can volunteer in organizations and areas that interest them, such as helping the needy, supporting local students in studies, or participating in sports and extracurricular activities. While such efforts are well-structured in Western societies and India, they are gaining momentum in developing nations. High school students in the United States often offer voluntary tutoring to underperforming students, utilizing public spaces like libraries. I have personally seen high school students in Lubbock, USA, using library spaces on Saturdays to offer free tutoring. This not only enriches service learning but also helps students stand out from their peers. Similarly, students participate in programs like the Boy Scouts of America, which foster leadership qualities and teamwork. Scouts emphasize the importance of teamwork, which is crucial for solving societal problems today. “It prepares youngsters to grow as respected citizens and contribute to society in various forms,” stated Lubbock-based businessperson Ranjhani Ramalingam, whose son is an Eagle Scout. “I find it imperative to involve young children in service to others to allow them to

experience the joy of giving to someone who can never pay you back,” added Dr. Barker.

### **Global Scenario and the Need for Service**

The post-COVID-19 world has exposed weaknesses in societies. During the pandemic, it became evident that, in addition to organized medical assistance, volunteers from various walks of life played crucial, lifesaving roles, addressing medical needs as well as providing food and other necessities. A touching example was the volunteers who helped with the funerals of those who passed away due to viral infection. The selfless actions of these heroes inspire millions of young people to put society's needs before their own interests. I have witnessed similar efforts by villagers in remote South India, helping poor people in distress. Such outpourings of empathy touch many lives and serve as inspiration to many youngsters. These acts should be shared widely to create a ripple effect among young people in both rural and urban areas. Organizations can regularly share stories of volunteering and service activities that improve health, enhance living standards, and strengthen community bonds. Like many cities across the United States, the Hindu Temple of Lubbock provides opportunities to volunteer, which also helps people connect. Agreeing with the importance of outreach in volunteering, Dr. Barker highlighted that Lubbock-based UMC Health System sends a weekly email discussing service opportunities and encouraging staff to get involved. “I do not think this can be mandated but showing results and photos/videos of successful service events tends to motivate others to become involved when they can,” added Dr. Barker.

### **Going Forward**

Given the global political and economic situation, it has become clear that, in addition to good governance and administrative astuteness, values such as care and global understanding are essential. Service to local and global communities among youth must be nurtured by schools and NGOs, as it will prove invaluable in navigating the complexities of our world.



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