

An interpretation of the role union members play as a positive force in the community.”

By Katrina Kerr

Union members will be a very positive force in the community and have a huge impact on the lives that they touch when they are serving others. Union members can be a positive force in the community by volunteering their time, talents, money, and/or donated items. It can be a combination of either of these things to help out and it's important to show the community that people do care. AT&T union members should have their kids to volunteer in the community as well. Teaching a child about giving back to the community can be as simple as having them going through their old toys and clothes to donate to someone who has less fortunate. Children can also assist with beautification or gardening projects; which is a good skill to learn. It's important to have them participate in community service projects at an early age so they can be appreciative of what they have and know that there are a lot of people who aren't so fortunate.

When employees give back to the community, it strengthens the individuals and the families living in that area. When people see that there are others who care, it will make them feel good and let them know that the individuals who work in their neighborhood care about them. When union members help other people, the people living in that environment begin to feel empowered to do more work in their own community. For example, if the union members begin a neighborhood beautification project, invite the neighborhood to come out and help. This invitation may motivate the community as they see the fruits of their labor as their neighborhoods begin to be 'cleaner' and more beautiful. Neighbors may enjoy working with the union members so much that they decide to clean up their neighborhood annually a few times a year. This is an example of how union members can invest in and strengthen the community by creating this partnership and making it an annual event.

Union members make a huge difference by working and volunteering in the community. The union members organizing food drives, back to school/toy/coat drives are excellent ways to help and serve others. The pictures displayed on www.ibew21.org shows employees serving others and you can see how happy and proud they are. All of these efforts show how compassionate this division of AT&T employees is and can be. With the commitment of hosting these drives every year, these events show that someone cares. It doesn't take money to help out your community; there are other avenues that people can use to lend a helping hand. It can be as simple as donating gently used clothing and coats to Goodwill, churches, or shelters. You can go to a school classroom to read a book to encourage literacy or volunteer to tutor at the local churches. You can donate your time at your church by working in the evangelism ministry or food pantry. You can also mentor the kids who attend your church. Buying extra school supplies when buying for your children and donating extra supplies to a back to school drive. There are so many ways to give back in the community; the options are limitless. It takes a village to raise a child and we all should live by this popular proverb.

On the flip side, union members can also reap the benefits of serving in the community as it will also make them a positive force in their workplace community. In addition to having a huge influence on the community, employees can grow on a personal level. You can make a significant difference in your community by taking the time to volunteer to others. You never know when you positively affect someone. I was a mentor for high school girl's group for 4 years and one of my daughter's friends sent me a card when she was a freshman in college. She let me know how much of a positive influence I was on her life, how glad she was to know me, and to have her in her life during her high school years. She is now a junior in college and she still keeps in touch with me. You never know when people are observing and/or admiring you and when you have

that an impactful effect on that person. By volunteering in the community, I feel that these selfless acts have made me a better person.

Overall, I interpret that union members play an important role as a positive force in the community in the following ways:

1. By strengthening the community,
2. Providing employees the satisfaction of helping others,
3. Boosting employee morale and job satisfaction,
4. Showing the community that union members care,
5. Union members may feel a sense of purpose by helping others,
6. Providing a sense of achievement or motivation to the union member,
7. Opportunities to work with like-minded individuals - members get the opportunity to interact with co-workers who they may have not ever gotten the chance to work with, and
8. Creating opportunities to meet and interact with diverse people - When union members work together, they will have the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life which encourages diversity.

Volunteering in the community can help union members develop personal and professional skills, provide them with a more positive attitude on life, increase productivity in the workplace, give them greater job satisfaction, and improve job retention. Volunteerism helps a person grow as an individual which makes you a better person, and a better employee. All of these benefits can help union members become better employees for AT&T with a purpose in life besides working your 9-5 everyday. By participating in service projects, union members can help

strengthen the community by showing them that AT&T's employees care about the people where they work. Based on my interpretation of the role union members play as a positive force in the community, it is imperative that they continue to have a strong presence in the community because it benefits everyone, the community and AT&T Local 21 employees, involved.