

Hesed Program Overview & Requirements

*"This is what the Lord asks of you, only this:
That you act justly,
Love tenderly (hesed),
And walk humbly with your God."
Micah 6:8*

THE MEANING OF "HESED"

Hesed is a Hebrew word found in the Scriptures which is usually translated as "loving kindness," "faithful love," "steadfast love," or "enduring love." Hesed refers to a covenant relationship between God and God's people.

This loving relationship between God and God's people is directed by an inner loyalty toward one another, one in which love is freely given and is characterized by constancy, steadfastness, and trust. It is exactly this meaning of "Hesed" that describes the program of service and care for and with others.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HESED PROGRAM

As a member of the Network of Sacred Heart Schools, Newton Country Day commits itself to educate to I) a personal and active faith in God, II) a deep respect for intellectual values, III) a social awareness which impels to action, IV) the building of community as a Christian value; and V) personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom. The Hesed Program is designed to meet each of these goals while being centered around Goal III - a social awareness which impels to action. Students give life to this Sacred Heart Goal by actively engaging in community service. By choosing a site where they can serve on a consistent and continual basis, the students are able to form reciprocal relationships with the people with whom they work, where each person gives as well as receives from the other. This fosters the building of community and enables the students to respond to the Gospel call to work for justice – an act which leads to a deepening of personal faith. Through a reflection process which encourages critical thinking and personal reflection, students mature intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. The Hesed Program encourages students to learn experientially and instills in them the values of courage, confidence, and civic responsibility.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- Pre-service: submit the Hesed Site Proposal & Pre-Service Reflection;
- Successfully complete at least **40 hours of community service**.
- Post-Service: submit a **log of hours served**, a **Reflection Paper**, and deliver a **10-minute slide presentation** in Religion 11 class.

I. Hesed Site Proposal, Student Agreement, & Pre-Service Reflection

Before beginning service work, students are required to submit a written proposal that details the parameters of the service work proposed, how the student enters into a reciprocal relationship with the people at the site, and responds to several prompts for reflection prior to the service experience.

1. Students must be engaged in **direct service with agencies that serve people who are vulnerable**.
2. Students may not be paid for their service, nor be supervised by relatives.
3. Though service to one's community can take on a variety of meaningful forms, Hesed projects should be service which is related to a social justice issue and meets a real need in the community. This allows the student to draw meaningful connections between her service work in Hesed and the social justice issues she will consider and study in Religion 11.
4. Students should aim to complete the Hesed project during Summer 2023, any exception to this will be considered on an individual basis.
5. Proposals are not considered "approved" (and volunteer service should not start!) until students receive confirmation from Dr. Potter.

II. Complete at least 40 Hours as a volunteer

- 1) The primary goal is for all service hours to be completed at the same site placement, which facilitates the formation of meaningful relationships over time. If necessary, a portion of the hours may be completed at another site that serves a similar demographic or that addresses a similar injustice.
- 2) Traditionally, Network Summer Service Projects are acceptable so long as they include regular, direct service with people in need. Similarly, extended service and immersion trips can count for the community service hours so long as the parameters of the trip are reviewed and approved by Dr. Potter.
- 3) Please note: If a student has not completed at least 30 verified hours by the end of the first semester, they will not be allowed to participate in athletics or extracurricular activities during the second semester until the Hesed commitment is complete.
- 4) A record of hours logged must be maintained throughout the service period, submitted directly to Dr. Potter with the site supervisor's signature; a verification email directly from the supervisor is also acceptable.

III. Final Products: Reflection Paper and In-Class Presentation

- 1) In addition to a log of accumulated service hours, students are required to write a reflection paper (at least 4 typed pages), submitted upon completion. Please note that the best reflection papers compile insights and observations that surface throughout the service experience. Students are advised to read the prompts and to keep a journal or write down notes periodically in the course of completing the hours.
- 2) For students completing service over the summer, all completed paperwork (record of hours and final reflection paper) are due at the end of September.
- 3) Every student will prepare and deliver a 10-minute slide presentation to her Religion 11 class. Presentations should include text, images, and other media that helps tell the story of her experience. *Note: Students should ask their site supervisors for PERMISSION to take photos (noting that many agencies need to preserve the confidentiality of their clients).*

Prompts for the Final Reflection Paper

SEE:

- Briefly describe your role and responsibilities at your service site.
- Who is being served at the agency and what underlying issues or injustices does the agency seek to address?
- Who and what will you remember? Why?

JUDGE:

- What have you learned about the needs of this community?
- What has your placement taught you about the basic dignity or value of human life and the ways that our society compromises that dignity?
- How have you gained deeper insight into the dynamics of injustice?

REFLECT:

- What aspects of the experience pushed you outside of your comfort zone?
- What aspect of your community service experience has made the deepest impression on you and why?
- Have you been able to enter into a reciprocal relationship with the people with whom you served? Why or why not?
- Has your faith been impacted by your service placement? How?

ACT:

- In what ways have you embodied the Goals of Sacred Heart education through your community service experience?
- What has disappointed or frustrated you about your service experience -- and do you have any suggestions for change?
- If you had the power to do something to change the social reality for people at your service site, what would you do?

Assessment

At the end of the year, students will be evaluated (High Pass, Pass, No Pass) by the Religion 11 teachers based on their successful completion of the required hours, timeliness in meeting deadlines, completion of the reflection paper, and any feedback received from the site supervisor. Students who demonstrate excellence, exceeding expectations in each category, will receive a High Pass. Students who fulfill the expectations of the Hesed Program will receive a Pass. Students who do not provide verification that they have finished their service hours or do not adhere to the schedule for submitting reflections will not pass until they do so.

Please note: Successful completion of the Hesed Program is required before the junior can become a senior in good standing; the school will not provide any college recommendations until Hesed obligations have been met.

***“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness
meets the world’s deep hunger.”
–Frederick Buechner***