



Social Service Leave background and quotes from past participants

"For six months, I was given the opportunity to work with the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. AG Bell is a resource, support network, and advocate for listening, learning, talking and living independently with hearing loss. As a parent of a 12-year-old oral-deaf girl, I was very familiar with the association's work. I also recognized that there was a need for parents of children with hearing loss to communicate with more experienced parents who could help them handle their daily challenges. My leave centered on developing a Parent to Parent Network using over 75 "points of connection." I spent my time creating the framework for a database of parents, designing supporting collaterals and ensuring that steps would be taken to engage the proper resources to fully implement the project. I intend to continue to see this project through as a member of the National Parent Advisory Council for AG Bell. After returning to Xerox, my mind seemed clearer and I could focus on my tasks without wondering if I was doing enough to help other parents of children with hearing loss. The feedback that I've received from AG Bell, parents and professionals alike tells me I did the right thing in asking Xerox for a social service leave. It was work that would never have been accomplished on a part-time, volunteer basis, nor would AG Bell have had the staff to devote to it. Besides hearing my daughter speak her first word at the age of 3, it was one of the most gratifying experiences I've had in my life."

-- Susan Schmidberger, SSL 2006

"The Humanitarian Service Project is a Chicago-area nonprofit, and part of our mission is to allow many below-poverty-line senior citizens (85% women) to live independently and with dignity, despite illness and a lack of mobility or transportation. I ultimately became the entire fund-raising capital campaign. The Humanitarian Service Project went from an old building and about \$133,000 in capital donations funds to an organization with over \$1 million raised (and hopefully more). We will purchase a larger property, for our current needs and necessary expansion, by June 2006. But, reaching the goal was a distant second to the fabulous, glorious journey. I learned so many new skills. It was simply put, the most enjoyable and rewarding year of my life. Most people cannot identify the best single year of their lives. I can, and it is the year 2005."

-- Bill Walsh, SSL 2005

"I spent 2004 at Green Chimneys Children's Services, a residential treatment center for emotionally disturbed young people located in Brewster, N.Y. I am very fortunate to have been a part of these children's troubled lives. The children taught me tolerance, compassion and love for all living beings. I have come through my experience a changed person. I now fully comprehend my responsibility to help those less fortunate than myself. I am continuing my work as an advocate for children in distress through mentoring and fund-raising. I have come to understand that it is truly better to give than to receive. That is where true happiness lies. Thank you to the Social Service Leave Program -- you changed my life and are making the world a better place."

-- Steven A. Mueller, SSL 2004

Back in 1971, Xerox created an experimental program called Social Service Leave. We did this because we wanted to respond to the needs of employees and of the communities where they lived and worked. Employees were telling us they wanted more out of their lives than just work. The communities were telling us they wanted more support from business and industry. So, Social Service Leave was conceived. Since that time, this unique program has evolved from experiment to tradition at Xerox.

Many and varied projects

Over the years, 475 Xerox employees have taken fully paid leaves of absence from their jobs, ranging from three months to one year, to work full-time on social action projects of their own design and choosing.

Here are just a few of the Social Service Leave projects undertaken: helping newly released prisoners find jobs, building a model classroom for mentally disabled children, counseling drug addicts, training women in skills for non-traditional jobs, helping create adequate housing for the homeless, providing legal aid to the poor.

And there have been many more. Xerox leavetakers have made contributions to their communities throughout the broad spectrum of human and social needs.

Applying for a leave

A number of companies have programs in which employees are “loaned” to service organizations. But with Social Service Leave, it is the employee, not the company, who takes the initiative. The decision to apply for a leave and what it shall be rests entirely with the individual employee.

The process begins with the employee submitting a formal, written application. The applicant outlines the goals of the proposed project and the specific activities needed to accomplish them. A letter from the sponsoring organization accepting the proposal must also be submitted with the application. Additional supporting material may also be included.

An employee does not need the permission of his or her manager to apply for leave or to go on one. There are only these limitations:

- The applicant must be an employee in good standing who will have completed five years of employment with Xerox at the time the leave begins.
- The proposed project must be sponsored or conducted by a functioning, nonprofit organization.
- Excluded are applications for personal schooling or for service to political, religious or sectarian groups.
- The employee must pay all expenses associated with the project.

The selection process

All applications are evaluated by an employee selection committee made up of a cross-section of employees, including previous service leave participants. Each committee member has one vote.

Employees on leave receive full pay, and will return to their same or equivalent job upon their return to Xerox. They also retain all of their company benefits and continue to earn vacation time. Union members retain their seniority.

While on leave, the leavetakers are asked to make monthly reports of their activities. A member of The Xerox Foundation will visit most leavetakers at least once during the leave to assess their project.

Throughout the years, Social Service Leave has consistently fulfilled all of the goals set for it. It has helped invigorate and preserve our communities. It has provided an outlet for employees to become involved. And it has given Xerox a further dimension of difference as a socially responsible corporation.

Past organizations that have received Social Service Leave volunteers include:

- California: Five Acres, Altadena; Public Allies, San Jose; Marin Jobs & Career Services, San Francisco; Environmental Traveling Companions, San Francisco.
- Pennsylvania: Children's Seashore House, Philadelphia; Three Rivers Adoption Council, Pittsburgh, Interfaith Housing Development Corporation of Bucks County.
- Rochester, N.Y.: American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Carlson Kids Child Care, Junior Achievement, Rochester Fire Department, Science Linkages in the Community, Sojourner House.
- Metro New York City area: Abbott House, Daytop Village, Green Chimneys Children's Services.
- Metro Washington, D.C., area: Morgan State University Foundation, Towson, Md.; My Sister's Place, Washington, D.C.; Wheelchair Athletics of the USA, Leesburg, Va.; Arlington County Schools Work & Family Studies, Virginia.