

Our Lady Academy

Ministry Project Guidelines 2026 - 2027

“God requires that we should be shining lamps giving light to all around us”-Mother Catherine McAuley

Service Learning Our Lady Academy seeks to create a Christ-centered community that is rooted in the Gospel values and fostered by the charisms of the Sisters of Mercy. Preparation of life is not just found between the covers of a book. We desire to develop in our students an awareness of those in need and a sense of compassion and justice.

Through our service learning program, we hope to instill the core belief that every human life is created by God and deserves love and respect. By offering assistance to those in need, students provide a valuable social service and grow to be women who make service an integral part of their lives.

*Students should keep in mind the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy in choosing service projects. **In addition to the service performed, the student must turn in a verification of Service Hours signed by the supervisor (may not be signed by the student's parent), and a reflective response.** Reflection forms must be turned in within two weeks of the activity, or they will not be accepted. **SUMMER SERVICE PROJECT REFLECTIONS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 1. AT LEAST ½ OF SERVICE HOURS MUST BE COMPLETED AND TURNED IN NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 21. FINAL SERVICE LEARNING REPORTS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN APRIL 30** of the school year. **Reflections will count as a test grade for BOTH the first semester and the second semester Religion grading period. Students not completing required number of service hours and reflections will not receive Religion credit for the year until hours are completed.** Information regarding the report will be distributed to students during the first week of Religion class.*

How many hours are required for EACH grade level?

7th and 8th grades= 20 hours, 10 must be completed at your church or parish

9th and 10th grades= 25 hours, 13 must be completed at your church or parish

11th and 12th grades = 30 hours, 15 must be completed at your church or parish

Honors are given for students earning DOUBLE the required credits in ALL categories

How do I find a service project?

The first step is to think about your gifts and interests? In Matthew 5:14-16, Jesus says, “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to the whole house. In the same way let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven.” How can you use those gifts to bring the light of Jesus to others? How can serving Jesus help you grow in your own faith? True service is more than just volunteer work, and you want your service to make a difference! Answering these questions will help you decide which type of service you are called to perform.

After deciding which type of service to perform, the next step is to consult local agencies and projects planned by school and church clubs and groups to pick a project. If you are in doubt about an activity, or are having trouble finding one, consult your Religion teacher before you begin. Your teacher can help you find a project that will use your gifts and fit the mission of service.

Examples of Ministry Hours Projects:

- Any activity for a non-profit charity
 - should be a 501c3 designated charity
 - **The event AND mission of the charity must be in line with Catholic teaching AND doctrine**
- Parish-related activities and ministries, such as:
 - mowing church or rectory lawns
 - folding Sunday bulletins
 - mission trips
 - altar serving/music ministry
 - parish improvement projects, cleaning and decorating the church
 - teaching in SRE/CCD/Children's Ministry
 - Altar Society/St. Vincent dePaul Society Projects
 - Serving at the Mercy Cross Center
 - **Up to 5 hours per semester** can be earned by participating in Parish/Diocesan Youth Trips, Conferences, Retreats, or Life Nights
- Participating in community service events such as (service hours MAY NOT be awarded for activities that primarily benefit a private business, commercial enterprise, or for-profit organization, even when conducted as part of a larger community event)
 - HeartWalk
 - Coast Cleanup
 - Relay for Life
 - Pink Hearts Fund
 - CASA
 - Make a Wish Foundation
 - Serving at King's Kitchen, Feed My Sheep
 - Harrison or Hancock County Animal Shelters
 - Volunteering at the hospital or nursing home
 - Creating and distributing care packages for soldiers, hospital patients, nursing home residents
 - Toys for Tots
 - Habitat for Humanity

*We are aware that students put in valuable time volunteering for a variety of needs, however, not all of these needs meet the criteria for service for this experience. While OLA encourages volunteerism, the following are examples of activities that are **not acceptable** for the requirements of this program:*

- *anything where the student receives compensation or payment*
- *family responsibilities such as household chores, mowing lawns, babysitting*
- *activities that benefit private clubs or HOAs*
- *Private/family/ or for profit businesses*
- *Tutoring siblings or friends*
- *Private/ for profit offices, businesses, dancing schools, etc..*
- *Politically affiliated groups/activities*
- *Concession Stands*
- *any work that is performed as part of the student's obligation as a member of a club*
- *anything that goes against Catholic teachings*

If you have any questions regarding service projects, please see your Religion teacher for answers. Forms to be signed supervisor and service reflection guidelines will be provided during the first week of Religion classes.

Sign and return your acknowledgement by the end of the first week of school.

We have read and understand the Service Project Guidelines for the Our Lady Academy Service Hours Program and agree to abide by these guidelines.

Parent's Signature _____ ***Date*** _____

Student's Signature _____ ***Date*** _____