

Social Service Leave background and quotes from past participants

"I worked for The Wellness Community of Central Arizona, which provides counseling, education, and other support services to cancer patients and their families, free of charge. During my leave I served as volunteer coordinator and headed up a speaker's bureau for the organization. The time spent at the Wellness Community was rewarding and challenging. The hardest part was losing people that I had grown close to and seeing young people, some in their early 20's, facing a life-threatening disease. The biggest lesson that I learned was to appreciate each day, to take time to smell the roses, and to show love and spend time with family and friends."

-- Hazel Peters-Clark, SSL 2000

"My Social Service Leave was the most rewarding year of my life. I grew up in a small logging town in northwestern Montana, and I was able to work for construction companies who taught me their business and actually taught me a type of apprenticeship program. I also was one of the founders of Denver Kids Inc., an agency that provides counseling to students at risk of dropping out of school. That experience growing up, and the leave time from Xerox, helped me create my own type of work/learning program for sophomores at Denver Kids Inc., called "School Works" that is still going today."

-- Greg Sauber, SSL 1997

"I worked for the Durham Literacy Council to promote adult literacy. The Social Service Leave experience was personally significant -- to have the opportunity to bring successful business practices, philosophies, and problem-solving skills from the Xerox world into a local nonprofit and to see immediate, positive results was gratifying. Literacy is so key to the success of the American free enterprise system. I was struck by the difference even one person can make . . . and of the applicability of business principles to nonprofit organizations. Gratifying as well was the eagerness of the nonprofit to embrace new ideas, concepts and ways of doing things that have proven successful in the corporate community."

-- Nancy Scott, SSL1998

"After searching for a support network for men with prostate cancer, I wanted to help start such a support group in Rochester, N.Y. Through the time I was granted by Xerox on Social Service Leave, I was able to work with a cancer support group to launch a new organization -- which has continued to grow and evolve over the years. Today, I continue to provide education and resources to men, specifically targeting inner-city communities, and the group reaches out to hundreds of men each year. It isn't an overstatement to say Social Service Leave changed my life."

-- Mike Woods, SSL 1995

Back in 1971, Xerox created an experimental program called Social Service Leave. We did this because we wanted to respond to the needs of our employees and of the communities where they lived and worked. Our employees were telling us that 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. And since that time, this unique program has evolved from experiment to tradition at Xerox.

Many and varied projects

Over the years, several hundred 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 leave-takers 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 3 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 leave-takers are asked to make monthly reports of their activities. A member of The Xerox Foundation will visit most leave-takers 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:

- Phoenix, Ariz.: The Wellness Community
- Los Angeles, Calif.: College Bound
- Atlanta, Ga.: The Cobb County Educational Enrichment Program
- Arlington, Leesburg and McLean, Va.: Arlington County Schools Family Education Center, Wheelchair Athletics of the U.S.A., the Sexual Assault Victims Advocacy Service
- Towson, Md.: Morgan State University Foundation
- Rochester, N.Y.: Science Linkages in the Community, Sojourner House, Carlson Kids Child Care
- New York, N.Y.: United Cerebral Palsy Association, Daytop Village