

Narrator: In honor of National Volunteer Week, the free Bridges Helpdesk for blind low vision youth, in collaboration with Sky's the Limit Communications, bring to you this five-part series on the benefits of volunteering. The Bridges Helpdesk for blind low vision youth logo shows horizontal view of a suspension bridge erected over a body of water. The word "Helpdesk" appears centered below the base of the bridge and above the water. Welcome to Part 3.

Eileen Rivera lie: I think we have a lot to here from Chris Nusbaum.

David DeNotaris: I was thinking the same thing, Ms. Eileen. Where is Chris? I'm like, Where's Chris?

Eileen Rivera Ley: Chris has been volunteering since he got out of the cradle, I think. He was, he was such a young, I remember hearing his voice and his, his, seeing him in action with social media leadership way before most of us ever figured out social media. And I thought, "Who is this guy? How did this like 30 or 40 year old get past me?" And he was just a teenager at the time. And I was completely impressed. So. So please, please, Chris, tell us a little bit about you.

Chris Nusbaum: Well, my name is Chris Nusbaum, and thank you for that wonderful introduction. I'm a senior at the University of Lynchburg in Virginia. I have been volunteering, as you said, going back to middle school, if not before. Primarily, I was a member of the National Honor Society during high school and then also was the president of the Leo Club, which you might be familiar with, the high school equivalent of the Lions, when I was in high school. And then throughout most of my time, in college, I've been a member of Alpha Phi Omega, which is a national co Ed service fraternity, on many college campuses across the country, probably at pretty much every college you go to, you'll find an APO chapter. And if you want to really have fun, and you're really ambitious volunteering, and you really have a heart for service, if you don't have an APO chapter, maybe you can help start one.

(Laughter)

Chris Nusbaum: And then also I've been very active volunteering for many years in the National Federation of the Blind and in various music ministries, with my church and other music programs and all kinds of fun things.

David DeNotaris: Absolutely fantastic, Chris. Chris, what has, how has volunteering, and you've been doing it your whole life, it's really ingrained in you. How has volunteering changed your life, would you say?

Chris Nusbaum: Oh, volunteering has changed my life in so many ways. I think most notably, volunteering has changed my life, in that it has shown, helped to show me who I am as a person, what my strengths are, and where I best fit into this crazy world. And even though it's not a career, volunteering has and is helping me to determine what my career path might be while I continue to look for jobs in the future. In fact, it was volunteering that inspired me to change my major halfway through college.

David DeNotaris: No kidding.

Chris Nusbaum: So I think that volunteering has really been rewarding for me in that it has helped me discover how great it is to work with and serve the community around me. And it's also really helped build not just my experience and my resume, which has been talked about on previous episodes of this podcast, and that's also important, but I think even more important than that, it has helped me and is continuing to help me build character.

David DeNotaris: I love it. Chris, I have one other question for you. I know Eileen's probably got a wheelbarrow full of questions for you. But I would just like to ask one other question. What, Chris, what, you know, what advice would you, do you have for the folks that you know, and we've all met them. They're just a little nervous about volunteering. They're not sure, like, you know, where should they volunteer, if they should volunteer., You know, is it going to take too much time out with my studies? Is it going to take too much away? Is it going to take me away from my existing friends? Like, what advice would you give to other students who are having all those swirling thoughts about volunteering?

Chris Nusbaum: I was definitely one of them. So I can relate to all of those nerves. And so my advice would be twofold. First, volunteering opportunities are virtually endless. And they can be found in pretty much any area of interest. So find those areas that you're good at, find those areas that you're interested in. For me, one of the big ones has always been music, and really latch on to those areas and find opportunities where you can enjoy it. One of the most fun and memorable volunteer opportunities I've ever

had was in my freshman year of college, where I took a volunteer service trip to help at an elementary school Halloween Carnival. I originally wasn't stationed at the cakewalk station. I was somewhere else and I was kind of bored. But then I heard somebody singing at this other station, and was curious about what was going on over there. So I went over there. And I ended up spending like two hours just having fun singing with this other mom, who turned out to be a professor at another college, a music teacher. And we were just having so much fun. We forgot we were volunteering. It was so much fun. And we ended up doing it for two more years. The first time it was a required trip for a class. And then the next year I was like, "hey, Miss Nora, are you doing it again?" So it's, so it's great, but find an area that you're interested in. And then the second thing is, you know, you said you might be concerned that it would take you away from your existing friends. volunteering for me has been something that connects me with friends. So find groups of people, whether it's a group like APO (Alpha Phi Omega), or any of the others service organizations out there, or whether it's just a group that shares your passion, and volunteer with them together. Make a social event out of it. And that will become a great opportunity for you to find a place in this big world of college or high school or the world outside of it.

David DeNotaris: I love it.

Chris Nusbaum: Something that I thought about was that volunteering has helped me, and I hope would help others, educate the public without trying. Because it goes from, it takes a blind person from being the person served to being the servant. And the sighted people involved are kind of forced to find a place for the blind person to do something because the blind person's already there. So for me, that has really helped to shift a lot of paradigms with my work with people. Because as I've joined organizations and as I've participated in volunteer projects, and as I've kind of inserted myself in areas, things have really started to change about people's perceptions around me about what I could do and what roles I could play.

Narrator: This unique project is being coordinated through the IMAGE Center of Maryland, a Center for Independent Living in Towson, and it is funded by a grant from the Maryland Department of Education division of special education, early intervention services.