

Community Service in the Dojang

The tenet of Community Service means more than doing things for others. It is an attitude of not just serving but of being a servant. Our current culture demeans the notion of being a servant. After all, many of our goals seem to be centered on rising to the top and competing and being victorious. But the tenet of Community Service ignores those aspirations and instead embraces the idea that one should be "less than, not greater than," one should put one's wishes completely aside for the benefit of others.

In its truest and deepest way, the dojang is a community. It does not exist for the benefit of the individual but for the growth of everyone. And the only way such a growth may occur is when everyone adopts the spirit of servanthood. The senior who thinks he is superior to the junior will always be arrogant, and the junior sees this attitude and can never truly respect or even like the senior. The junior who fails to acknowledge the senior will never grow out of himself because he will never be grateful.

The senior must be a servant to the junior. He must never resent spending time with the junior. He must put aside all of his own wishes and interact with the junior gently and generously. He must think of nothing but the junior's progress and the junior's well being. He must encourage and approach the junior in a joyful and honest way. He must completely ignore the fact that he himself might benefit from teaching the junior; in fact, he must expect nothing in return. (The minute that we expect something from another, we are not truly serving because we are thinking of ourselves.)

The junior must be a servant to the senior. He must put his senior's needs before his own and think of his senior before he thinks of himself. He must be eager and open to the words of the senior and acknowledge the senior's experience and time. He must be grateful and appreciative of the fact that the senior may teach him much. He must never compete with the senior. (Competition in the dojang breeds only resentment and fear and jealousy.)

So what happens when everyone serves each other? What happens when Community Service becomes a priority in the dojang? Simply put, it becomes more than an ideal. It becomes a living reality where the word "community" means family. True service will be at the heart of the junior-senior relationship because each individual adopts the humble spirit of a servant who chooses to put others before himself and who recognizes that at its greatest depth, true service is an act of love.