**May I help you?**

Learning real-life skills, giving back to the community

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**A**t the crack of dawn few people, let alone teenagers, are awake. Among the brave that choose to do so are the student council members that work in the Viking Café. Arriving at 7 a.m., the members set up and run the café, providing fellow peers with warm beverages like lattes and hot chocolates. The council members insist that running the café isn’t as grueling as it sounds. In fact, it has been quite beneficial to developing their service abilities.

Student Council is not only involved in the Viking Café, but also in countless of other service projects such as raising money for breast cancer research.

SAC sponsor Chris White is in charge of the Viking Café and elaborates on the benefits participating students garner.

“We, here at SHS, prepare students for just about everything they will confront in the real world. One of those things is customer service. There are many students who work in various jobs here at the school that involve customer service,” White said.

Being a staff member at the Viking Café isn’t the only way to develop skills for the working world. A variety of courses and extracurriculars are offered to help teens prepare for a wide range of professions. They can learn about cyber security as well as engineering, technology, and advertising.

Norse News, Saga, and Photography teach staffers how to use applications like Photoshop and InDesign. InDesign is a publishing software used to create print media like newspapers and brochures.

Not only do members learn computer skills but they also interact with businesses, as all of these organizations require funding. The members of each staff are responsible for selling ads to local businesses so that their peers don’t have to pay as much for the publications. Norse News is offered to students and teachers at no cost.

Senior Mary Margaret Reynolds is a member of SAGA and has been selling ads for three years.

“Every member of the SAGA staff is pushed to sell $700 in ads, as for Norse News, they have to sell $360. We all work really hard to reach this amount so the yearbooks can be sold for a lot less than they originally would be. Our sales help the school by making it more affordable for more students,” Reynolds said.

When people enter the atrium, they see another example of service at work.

The Viking Store is where people learn to handle a store front, print t-shirts, and manage money. This teaches future life skills such as responsibility for money and creating products. The Viking Unlimited Apparel Store provides many products to purchase with Viking logos.

Dennis Roberts runs Viking Printing and, along with Jenifer Richard, is in charge of the store.

“It is part two of several business courses including Digital Multimedia, Image Editing and Entrepreneurship. Some of the things we sell in the Viking shop are apparel, tote bags, blankets, key chains, fitness bottles, purses and much more,” Roberts said.

The store uses Viking Printing as the source of much of the merchandising. Along with all of the apparel in the store, Viking printing can also use their laser engraving machine to make key chains, awards, and plaques. In the store, the members are able to apply the skills they acquired in their previous business class in a real-world setting.

Service organizations play an important role in the daily life of teenagers. They also offer a unique opportunity for class members to practice what they learn.

Girlz United offers a slightly different kind of service than the commercial ones. This group is dedicated to empowering girls and helping those in unfortunate circumstances to have more opportunities.

For a book drive, the group collected 332 books for children in District Seven. Also, the club collected feminine hygiene products for homeless women, in conjunction with other Spartanburg organizations. Girlz United partnered with Women’s United, which is a part of the United Way, during National Women’s Month, so the girls could network with other female professionals in the Spartanburg area.

Junior Currin Blackley is a member of Girlz United and has participated in helping the community.

“We are taking a step forward into changing the lives of young kids by bringing in books, clothes, and giving them hope that someone loves them and that they are not alone,” Blackley said.

The Viking Vendor, run by Richards, is another group that offers a facility that other schools don’t have. In the Viking Vendor, classmates can purchase snacks and drinks. The vendor is conveniently located next to the cafeteria. The vendor also provides the opportunity for people interested in business to practice the techniques they learn in class.

“Students have to take the prerequisite Entrepreneurship I course in the classroom and then apply to work in the school store/Viking Vendor. The students get a half unit of credit for working in the store,” Richards said.

The Viking Vendor volunteers learn workplace expertise and how to manage inventory and money. They also have the advantage of going to competitions and trade fairs using the profits of the Vendor.