MILLENNIAL COLLEGE STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERING:
THEIR MOTIVATIONS AND PERCEIVED OBSTACLES

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ABSTRACT

Because volunteers are the lifeblood of nonprofit organizations, it is important to understand a new generation of volunteers that will help sustain these organizations: millennial college students. Using the Self-Determination Theory as a theoretical framework, this research explored the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that encourage millennial college student volunteerism. Furthermore, the obstacles that prevent volunteerism were also examined. Qualitative in-depth interviews with eleven millennial college students revealed six motivations that drive volunteerism: 1) the desire to feel comfortable and wanting to know what to expect from a volunteer experience 2) a balance of task enjoyment with other factors that contributed to an overall positive volunteer experience 3) the satisfaction of seeing results from the volunteer labor 4) challenges that lead to a transformative experience 5) feeling of warm-glow 6) feeling of gratitude. Next, the data revealed the obstacles that discourage volunteering: lack of time and lack of structure. Nonprofit managers can use insights found in this research study to create more effective strategies for attracting, recruiting and retaining millennial college students.