

This week is National Volunteers week and because Extension and 4-H rely heavily on volunteers to help run and implement our various programs, I couldn't think of a better topic for this week's article. When I first moved here last summer, I was pleasantly surprised to see how many different community service organizations that a small community like Rawlins county had and the amount of people that invested their time in multiple organizations.

Volunteering is important to any small community in the fact that if people had to be hired to run certain events, it might not be economically feasible to host them. If you look at the economic impact that events like the upcoming Early Rod Run have on our local businesses, we can definitely see the value of all of the volunteer hours put into organizing and running that one event in the out of town dollars brought to our local businesses. Another way to look at the economic value of volunteering is to look at the national standard dollar value for volunteering. This value is currently \$27.10 per volunteer hour. Now if you extrapolate that number out with even a small donation of 2 hours a month of your time, that calculates to \$650.40 per year in value to that organization you are helping.

There are also many values to the volunteer as well. Studies have shown that volunteers have increased self-confidence and self-esteem, it benefits both your mental and physical health, it gives volunteers a sense of purpose, and it can also be beneficial to your career. Now I know that no one that volunteers does so to benefit themselves but these are some nice unexpected benefits for giving up some free time. Not to mention the benefits you reap by improving your community whether that means having something fun to do right in your home town, developing youth who will one day come back and be the volunteers themselves or maybe even helping provide that influx of business that a store or service provider needs to continue operating in your community.

To wrap this up, I would just like to say a big "Thank You!" to all of the volunteers in Rawlins county and urge those of you that are thinking of volunteering to jump in and donate some of your time for the good of the community and yourself.