The goal of this guide is to answer questions and equip students with the information needed to be successful in their service-learning work.
Welcome to service-learning at Chestnut Hill College! Established in the 1990s, the service-learning program is an additional way for students to engage with the community. Each year, students generally ask the same questions:

🔍 What is service-learning?
🔍 Why are we doing service-learning?
🔍 How do we do service-learning?

This guide was created by the Office of Service-Learning to help prepare students for their service experiences. Enjoy, and please let us know if you have questions or information that you would like to contribute.

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MUST-KNOWS ABOUT SERVICE-LEARNING

Chestnut Hill College defines service-learning as “a methodology that combines academic instruction, meaningful service, and critical reflective thinking to promote student learning and civic responsibility.” It’s different from volunteerism, internships, or consulting work.

Community agencies that partner with Chestnut Hill College want to know that the students they work with in service-learning are well-prepared and understand their roles in the community. The points below will provide you with the most important information you should know when participating in service-learning:

- As students, we need to enter into the community as listeners that respect the direction and guidance given by our community hosts. Service-learning isn’t about student-experts giving away free labor. Rather, it’s a learning partnership in which we learn from community hosts and collaborate with them on service projects.

- It is beneficial to define and re-define your personal idea of service throughout your experience, as this will provide you a deeper understanding of your work.

- Campus and community culture, while similar in some instances, needs to be considered when working with community partners in terms of communication, schedules, use of technology, and priorities.

- When serving in the community, appropriate dress and professional communication skills are important. For example, it is unacceptable to drop by an agency without first making an appointment. Remember you are an ambassador of Chestnut Hill College.

- Managing your expectations, including understanding conflicting emotions and the need for flexibility, will be required before, during, and after your service experience.

- Safety is extremely important when working in any community. Be sure to educate yourself about transportation options, the community you are serving in, and safety precautions.

- It is beneficial to have an understanding of the history of the community where you serve, as this will provide a framework through which you can interpret your experience and interact with community members.

- Reflection is one of the defining characteristics that sets service-learning apart from other experiential learning. While you will be completing course-specific reflection, it is helpful to spend additional time considering your service experience.

- Because service-learning takes you outside the walls of Chestnut Hill College classrooms and into the community, it is beneficial to plan ahead so that you are able to complete your obligations both on and off campus.
UNDERSTANDING SERVICE-LEARNING

Chestnut Hill College defines service-learning as a teaching methodology that combines three key concepts to enhance student learning and social responsibility:

- Academic instruction
- Meaningful service
- Critical reflective thinking

In other words, service-learning is an approach that unifies what you learn in the classroom with the service you are doing in the community. Through meaningful reflection, you can solidify the concepts taught in the classroom and develop a sense of responsibility in the community. The diagram shows the difference between service-learning and other types of community work. The difference between service-learning and an internship, volunteerism, or field research is that it balances the needs of the student with the needs of the community and the needs of academic learning.

Adapted from Santilli & Falbo, 2001
The Purpose of Service-Learning

Chestnut Hill College’s service-learning program is a form of experiential education in which students engage in community service as an integral part of achieving academic course goals. Flowing from our Mission of a holistic education in service to one another and to the global community, and inspired by the Mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph to the dear neighbor, academic service-learning at Chestnut Hill College involves service activities that respond to an expressed community need.

Community service combined with academic content allows students to examine human and social problems through the lens of personal experiences and structured reflection. Student learning is enhanced by an increased awareness of our shared moral and ethical responsibilities to the community, reflective of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

The College seeks to partner with others in a way that serves the under-served and allows us to live out the mission of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. The Office of Service-Learning works with communities to address issues that affect quality of life for the world’s people, animals, or the environment. In addition to fulfilling course requirements you may also find that your service-learning experience fulfills deeper needs for you, such as becoming a better citizen and student of the community. Whatever your driving purpose is, service-learning will help you to achieve better knowledge of course concepts, practice meaningful service, and accomplish critical reflective thinking, all the while helping you to fulfill your civic responsibilities.

Type of Service

Students in service-learning classes get involved with community organizations through ongoing, direct service: students provide regular service for a set number of hours over the course of a semester such as tutoring children, providing companionship to residents of assisted care living facilities, or participating in community clean-ups.

Service-Learning courses have several very important characteristics:

- **Service activities are clearly linked to what you learn.** Service is one of the means you will use to meet your learning objectives.

- **The service you provide is decided by the community agency with which you work.** The, instructor, or students do not decide for the community partner what will be done, but work with them to decide how to best use students’ talents and knowledge to meet a community identified need.

- **The partnership with the agency is reciprocal.** You get out of the relationship as much as you give. There is much to learn from the service experience and from the people with whom you work.

- **You will reflect on the experience.** Reflection assignments will help you clarify how the experience reinforces course concepts, grow as a citizen, and relate the experience and concepts to issues of social justice. You will reflect before, during, and after the experience.
Chestnut Hill College Service-Learning Examples

As with all learning, it is valuable to have examples through which a learner can gain a deeper and a better understanding of your focus. The following examples are adapted from the Chestnut Hill College's Service-Learning Projects.

**Introduction to Liberal Arts- The Body and Culture**

- **What:** Serves both as a second-level writing course and as an introduction to various disciplines within the Liberal Arts.
- **Where:** Roxborough High School
- **Why:** Students are paired with high school seniors to help them complete their Senior Projects graduation requirement. By helping the students hone their skills, volunteers are serving a community need but also developing their own communication skills.

**Hardware and Peripherals**

- **What:** Provides a challenging introduction to technology for students interested in a major or minor in computer and information technology or related fields. Topics include elements of computer architecture and peripherals, fundamentals of computer networking, and ethical issues related to technology. Upon the completion of this course students should be prepared to take the A+ Certification Examination
- **Where:** Team Children, Norristown, PA
- **Why:** Students involved in this service-learning course have the opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct computers at their community partner. The volunteers help refurbish computers for schools and families in need.

**Spanish for Educators**

- **What:** A course designed for students interested in pursuing education as a career. In this course students learn Spanish that will be useful to them in speaking with students and families whose first language is not English.
- **Where:** Whitehall Elementary School, Norristown, PA
- **Why:** The Volunteers will help students in a variety of classes to help them understand the instruction given. Many students will not speak English as a first language, but will vary on skill level. Learning Strategies include: Written Communication, Info Literacy, Speaking and Listening, Ethics; Work Ethic/Life Skills, and Math. Students will go into English Language Learner classes to assist with projects.
GETTING READY FOR SERVICE-LEARNING

Campus Culture vs. Community Culture

It is important to understand that campus and community cultures are quite different and, as a student involved in service-learning, you must be patient and professional. Most importantly, always remember that the culture you live and thrive in is, in many cases, much different from the culture of both your community partner and the people you are serving.

Here are a few tips for interacting with your Community Partner:

- Communicate effectively! Know what method of communication your community partner prefers (work phone, cell phone, e-mail, etc).
- Think ahead! Anticipate your needs and prepare questions in advance to ask your community partner.
- Listen! Don’t be afraid to get off subject every once in a while to listen to stories from the community.
- Be flexible! Remember that communities don’t operate on semester timelines and projects in the community often experience delays and unexpected turns.
- Be respectful! Remember that you are interacting with real people in their communities and that you carry the name and reputation of Chestnut Hill College with you.

Tips for Success with Blending Campus and Community Cultures

1. Think of your service work like a job:
   - Avoid using your cell phone, inappropriate language, or inappropriate dress.
   - Try not to be late. If you will be arriving late, call to let your community contact know.
   - If you will be absent, give as much notice as possible (usually a few days to a week). Try to reschedule. It’s important not to cancel at the last minute.
   - Make sure to say goodbye and thank your host before you leave for the day.

2. Be patient while on site. Your community host might be called away for a few minutes to handle a work situation.

3. Think of yourself as a guest in someone else’s community (just like being a guest in someone’s home). It’s important to be polite, listen, and show gratitude to people who work with you.

4. Generally, make your initial contact via a phone call. Then, make sure to ask how your community host prefers to be contacted (phone or email) in the future. Not every staff person uses email regularly.

5. When leaving messages at community organizations, it’s reasonable to expect a return call or email within 3 business days. Don’t worry if they don’t get back to you right away.

6. When discussing service work, be prepared to share information about your class schedule, work schedule, and semester breaks. Most agency staff don’t know when our semester ends, when our breaks happen, and when our midterm and final exams happen.

7. When calling a community contact:
   - Know the name and title of the person you are calling. Often, you will be calling a general reception number and will need to be specific.
   - Leave detailed phone messages:
8. When emailing a community contact (remember, some agency staff don’t use email regularly):
   - Be professional. Introduce yourself, the purpose for your email, and your question.
   - Make sure to use a descriptive subject line so your message doesn’t get filtered out by spam detectors.
   - Provide your complete contact information.
   - Consider developing a signature for your email. For example:
     - Joe Smith
     - Junior, Communications
     - Chestnut Hill College, Class of 2015
     - 412-XXX-XXXX, smith@CHC.edu

9. When visiting a community contact:
   - Call ahead to schedule meetings with agency staff and support offices on campus. Don’t stop by if you aren’t expected.
   - Prior to going, ask about which entrance to use, where to park, and whether you should first stop at a reception desk.

10. Enjoy your time with your community host. Service can often lead to employment references, internships, and networking opportunities.

**Flexibility in Service-Learning**

Before you visit your site the first time and throughout your service-learning experience, it is important to remember that service-learning is **dynamic and flexible**. Students who are most successful with service-learning avoid being rigid. This style of learning is not like reading a text book or listening to a lecture because not everything goes to plan. No two days are the same, which is invigorating and rewarding. The more willing you are to “go with the flow” or adjust to changes (in what you’re asked to do, in when you can be there) the more successful and enjoyable service-learning will be!

Keep this philosophy in mind while participating in your service-learning: “Be open to everything and attached to nothing.”
PLANNING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Your First Day on Site

Arriving on your first day working with your community partner can be an exciting and nerve-racking experience. It's important to remember that you have many support systems in place to help structure not only your experience the first day, but throughout your service-learning experience. Keep in mind the following thoughts and suggestions before arriving to work with your community partner:

🌟 Your professor has planned out your service-learning course through their partnership with the community agency before you begin the experience. Through this partnership, your professor has collaboratively defined the work you are expected to accomplish with your community partner. Take time to understand your professor’s expectations before arriving your first day on site through class discussions or one on one conversations with your professor.

🌟 Even though your professor has discussed your work with the community partner in advance, it is important to remember that community partners often host different groups of Chestnut Hill College students through different service-learning courses. When you meet with your community partner for the first time, have another conversation about their expectations for working with you. Be sure to identify which service-learning class you are taking and to review what you’ve been told you would do at this site by your professor. Additionally, discuss logistics such as what hours the community partner is available for you to work and what hours the community partner expects you to be there. These conversations will help you understand how to meet the course requirements and serve the community partner’s need, while setting clear parameters of your experience.

🌟 You are an equal partner in making sure your service-learning experience starts off on the right foot! Read a little bit online about the community agency and information about the community in which it is located before you arrive for the first day. This can help you form other questions you might have about your experience with this agency. If you take the opportunity to establish how you will communicate with your community partner your first day on site, you will begin creating a strong relationship with your community partner that will set a positive tone for the rest of your experience.
Questions to Ask…

Your faculty member:
- What is the time commitment associated with the service-learning component of this course?
- By what date do we need to begin our service work?
- How do we share concerns or questions with you about our service-learning work?
- What are our transportation options to the service-site?
- How will our reflective assignments be evaluated?

Your community host:
- What type of training or orientation is required?
- What materials should be brought to the site?
- What clothing needs to be worn at the site?
- How do you prefer to be contacted?
- What is your complete contact information?
- Is there a specific place where I should park at the site?
- Is there a specific entrance I should use when entering the site?

Scripts for Contacting Agency Personnel

If you need to contact your agency partner to set-up your participation schedule, these scripts may be helpful to you.

Phone:
Hello. My name is ______ and I am a student in Dr. ______’s service-learning course. I am calling to get some information regarding the service-learning project with your agency. I was wondering if you had time to discuss the project with me. You can reach me on my cell-phone at 555.555.5555 from _____ a.m. to _____ p.m., or email me at whoever@CHC.edu. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thanks!

Email:
To: whoever@gmail.com
From: whoever@CHC.edu
Subject: Service-learning Project for Dr. ______’s Course
Dear Ms. /Mr. ______,
My name is _______ and I am a student in Dr. ______’s service-learning course at Chestnut Hill College. I am writing to you in regards to the upcoming service opportunity at your agency on (Month/Day) ___. I am curious as to what materials I should bring with me on the day of the event. If you could provide me with any information, I would greatly appreciate it.

Thank you,
Name
Chestnut Hill College
whoever@CHC.edu
555.555.5555
Planning Your Time

The amount of time you spend in service varies by the class and can be anywhere from 10-30 hours over the length of a semester. The guide below may help you plan your time. Your faculty member and community host may have more specific expectations.

### Ongoing, Direct Service-Learning Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd Week</td>
<td>You should be in contact with your community host. Depending on your instructor, you may be having a group site visit. If not, you should plan a visit to your site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Week</td>
<td>You should have a schedule of when you will do your service. Make sure to plan for semester breaks and holidays. You should begin service during or before this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Week</td>
<td>If you haven’t yet begun your service (by early October or mid February depending of the term), this may be problematic unless your faculty member, a member of the service-learning staff, and the community host have a specific plan for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Week</td>
<td>Remember College midterms occur around this time. Schedule accordingly- missing service because you have an assignment due is not a valid excuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Week</td>
<td><strong>The semester is half-way over. Your service should be well underway!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Week</td>
<td>There are only two weeks left for service. You should be preparing for completion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th Week</td>
<td>Last week for service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Week</td>
<td>Finals and end of the semester. No service this week except in extreme circumstances. These circumstances need to be discussed with your faculty member and a member of the service-learning staff well in advance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Your Turn... Timeline Template

You might find this blank schedule helpful as you map out your timeline in a fashion similar to the previous chart. To complete the blank schedule, use your class syllabus or as a group during a class discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks to be completed including:</th>
<th>Important Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🔄 Service hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📝 Reflection Assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📝 Final service-learning papers, presentations, or projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Week</th>
<th>Review syllabus, complete this timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Week</td>
<td>Somewhere around the 7th week of the semester is Midterms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Week</td>
<td>Half-way point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th Week</td>
<td>Usually the last week for service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Week</td>
<td>Final examinations: end of semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THINKING ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE

Overcoming Obstacles

While service-learning is typically a rich and rewarding experience for those involved, sometimes challenges arise—with the project itself or your own expectations. The following information is meant to make the challenges seem less daunting.

Emotions

When serving in an area which is completely unfamiliar, you may experience culture shock and a wide variety of emotions and reactions such as fear, anxiousness, sadness, guilt, anger, etc. These feelings may become deeper as you establish a relationship with the agency or community—you may feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities which have been given to you and, in turn, may begin to question if you are truly making an impact on the community.

Because of the emotional turmoil these feelings can create if ignored, it is highly important that you reflect upon your experience before, during, and after service to understand and manage your feelings. If you take the time to unpack your role in the experience and reflect upon your service, you will be better equipped to process your emotions and the experience will become much less stressful for you.

Varying Conditions

While you, your professor, and the community agency personnel may have developed an official and precise plan as to how your service-learning project is to unfold, sometimes plans must change—be postponed, cancelled, or completely rerouted. Because of this, it is necessary to remain flexible and open to new situations, rather than becoming fearful of the unknown. Fearing change and refusing to adapt to new situations will only lead to much stress and a lack of enjoyment and fulfillment. Therefore, it is imperative that you remain open to the re-grouping of ideas and plans so that a successful change can be implemented which adequately satisfies the needs of all involved. While the original strategy might not be followed as planned, the ultimate goal of helping a community remains the same—so stay positive and enjoy the experience.

Unmet Expectations

You can surely think of a time when a project or outcome did not meet your expectations. Just as with any other project, regardless of the amount of dedication and enthusiasm you bring, service-learning projects sometimes do not end up as anticipated. Service-learning projects require you to work in unfamiliar territory with people you have never met before—which can sometimes lead to unorganized activity, miscommunication, and the creation of unrealistic expectations.

Perhaps you were unable to accomplish the goal you originally established or were unable to complete your desired amount of hours at the site of your choice. Maybe the community agency was unable to thrive and had to close its doors, or perhaps you’re left feeling like you have not been of service to anyone.

These circumstances, while frustrating, should not leave you disheartened. While unmet expectations can be frustrating, it does not mean that the experience was a failure—there is still something to be learned from the service experience. Therefore, use all service-learning projects, whether completed as planned or differing from expected goals, as tools for growth with the potential to help you learn how to reevaluate how you view success and failure in regards to service.
Questions to Guide Reflection on Your Experience

Beforehand:

- Brainstorm words, feelings, and stereotypes you come up with when you think of the area and the population you will be serving. Don’t censor yourself. Be free and creative.
- What do you hope to gain from this experience?
- What does it mean to provide effective service to a community agency?
- What is responsible service?
- What skills/knowledge do you have to offer?
- Why does the organization you are working for exist? What is the agency’s mission or goal?
- What are some potential obstacles you might face during this experience?
- What are the community’s critical issues that you will be working on?
- Do you have any ethical dilemmas about taking on this project?
- What is the ultimate goal of your service-learning project?
- What is one way in which you expect the community you are serving to nourish, nurture, or satisfy you?
- How do you define community?
- What are your expectations of the agency staff you will meet? The clients?
- Finish these sentences: Today I hope… I am most anxious about…because I expect community members to be…

During:

- Upon arrival, what are the sights, sounds, smells, initial feelings, and impressions that you have? Be descriptive. Don’t analyze, just observe and record.
- What do you think is the most valuable service you can offer at your site?
- What are some of the pressing needs/issues in the community? At the service site?
- What does this service-learning project mean to me?
- What does it feel like to come into and leave my different roles (student, server, etc)?
- What of myself am I sharing with others?
- How are you perceived by the people you are serving?
- Connect course material to your current situation.
- Do you observe any similarities between you and the people you are serving?
- If you were one of the people receiving services, what would you think of yourself?
- What public policies are involved and what are their implications? How can they be improved?
- Do you think these people or situations are unique? Why or why not?
- Is there a difference between what we think is needed and what the recipients of the services think is needed? How do you know?
- What kinds of things/issues are present but unsaid in this experience? How are you paying attention to them?
- What can you infer from people’s body language?
- What brings people to the service site?
After:

Reflecting on your previous definition of service, how would you alter that definition based on your recent service experience?

Have you learned anything which will be valuable to your career aspirations?

How would you describe your experience to your friend?

What sort of service experience are you interested in for the future?

How does your service-learning experience relate to the learning objectives of the course?

How have you been challenged?

What new skills have you learned since beginning your service?

Describe what you have learned about yourself as a result of your service.

How do you see your role with this project? How does that compare with how others may see your role?

What were your initial expectations? Have these expectations changed? How? Why?

What about your community involvement has been an eye-opening experience?

Has your view of the population with whom you have been working changed? How?

Has the experience affected your worldview? How?

How did your understanding of the community change as a result of your participation in this service?

What are the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?

Talk about any disappointments or successes of your project. What did you learn from it?

Complete this sentence: Because of my service-learning, I am....

How can society be more compassionate/informed/involved regarding this community?

What can you do with the knowledge you gained from the experience to promote change?

How have you influenced the agency?

Imagine if the agency did not exist. Describe the potential consequences for the population which it currently serves, as well as the community as a whole.
Community Profiles

Roxborough/Manayunk

Roxborough’s past, present, and future focuses on the themes of community and entrepreneurialism. In 1690 William Penn divided 11 tracks of land between the Schuylkill River, Germantown border and Montgomery County. This land was sold at auction and was divided into smaller tracts of land for farming and settlement.

While Roxborough is only nine miles northwest of Center City Philadelphia in the 18th century there were significant differences in the economic and social attitudes of the two regions. Roxborough was isolated from Philadelphia due to geographic obstacles. The Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek served as land barriers and the steep hills and unpaved roads made 18th century modes of transportation very challenging.

The second differential to the City of Philadelphia was that the earliest settlers that lived in Roxborough wanted to live a communal and self-determining way of life. Many of the residents in Center City Philadelphia were Tories and had allegiances to Britain and believed in the British economic system. The Roxborough people were determined to promote sustainable communal and commercial lifestyles. Many of the crops as well as other goods and services were traded amongst the Roxborough community as well as to locations in Lancaster and Harrisburg.

Many attitudes and characteristics of the Roxborough neighborhood in the 21st century are consistent in comparison to the residents of the 18th and 19th centuries. Residents of Roxborough have strong civic pride being active in their local civic association, town watch and historical association. The Roxborough Commercial Corridor contains a variety of businesses and building inventory for entrepreneurs to establish a business venture. Many residents have family members that have lived in Roxborough for generations, attended the Roxborough High School and can give a historical account of properties along the commercial corridor and identify which businesses were here previously. The neighborhood’s communal character allows makes everyone feel welcomed.
Germantown

The Germantown area of Philadelphia is one of Philadelphia's oldest settlements. It was originally settled by Mennonite and Quaker German speaking émigrés from Holland, Germany and Switzerland attracted to Philadelphia by William Penn's promises of religious tolerance.

When Philadelphia was occupied by the British during the American Revolutionary War, several units were housed in Germantown. In the Battle of Germantown, in 1777, the Continental Army attacked these British units. While the Americans sustained heavy losses, the fervor of the Americans helped influence the French to recognize the new American nation.

In the early 1800's Germantown grew as a manufacturing center of the region. It was officially incorporated into the City of Philadelphia in 1854.

Beginning in the 1930's Germantown began to see signs of urban blight and decay. Once a middle and upper class white community, Germantown saw an influx of poorer African Americans moving to the city from the south seeking employment. By the 1950's Germantown had seen a large exodus of its middle class, primarily German descendant residents for the Philadelphia suburbs. The area's historic sites, however, are well maintained.

**Location:** Germantown today consists of both Germantown (west of Germantown Ave.) and East Germantown (east of Germantown). This incorporates much of the original areas of Upper Germantown and Lower Germantown.

Germantown stretches for about two miles along both sides of Germantown Avenue from the Tioga/Nicetown sections of Philadelphia, at Windrim Avenue and SEPTA's Wayne Junction northwest, to Upsal Street and the Mt. Airy neighborhood of Philadelphia.

**Getting There:** Germantown is serviced by a number of SEPTA bus routes: 23, 26, 53, 65, H and XH, J, and K. It is also serviced by the following SEPTA Regional Rail Lines: R7 Chestnut Hill East and the R8 Chestnut Hill West.
Norristown

Norristown was one of the largest communities under Pennsylvania’s borough form of government. Now, the official name is Municipality of Norristown, operating under a Home Rule Charter with that designation since 1986. Located on the Schuylkill River, it was established as a mill town and as a seat of county government.

At one time Norristown was a retail center for the rural areas outside of Philadelphia. With the growth of suburban communities and large shopping malls including the King of Prussia Mall and the Plymouth Meeting Mall in the outlying townships, Norristown’s retail sector steadily declined and eventually collapsed.

Today the city’s economy is powered by Montgomery County government jobs, the legal profession, and health care. Montgomery Hospital and Norristown State Hospital are located there. While the downtown has suffered in recent years, the residential areas of Norristown remain largely well-maintained. Row homes and twin homes are more numerous than single family residences.

The city is a transit center and the Norristown Transportation Center is the terminus of the Norristown High Speed rail line and a stop on the former Reading Railroad Norristown train to Center City Philadelphia (both now are part of the regional transit system called the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority-SEPTA).
If the community where your service-learning is taking place is not mentioned in the Community Profiles section, we suggest that you do some research on your community site and the surrounding area.

Below are some helpful websites that can get you better acquainted with your assigned community:

www.visitphilly.com
phillyliving.com
www.philly.com
THINGS TO REMEMBER DURING SERVICE

Safety
Being in an unfamiliar place can be intimidating, however, you can take steps to diminish risks at your service-learning site. Any time you are in an urban area, you need to be smart about decisions you make. Take the time to speak with your professor about the community you will work in, as well as speak with your community partner about what you should know about the community’s characteristics. By educating yourself on the community and using your best judgment, you can have a safe and successful service-learning experience.

Because service-learning requires you to work off-campus in community settings, you will be susceptible to risks that are not typical of traditional classroom learning. To stay safe and decrease risks, follow these guidelines:

- Go to your service site with at least one other classmate.
- Make sure you are clear about what you are expected to do within your service assignment, and do not go beyond that scope of work—this is critical to managing risk while on site.
- Take Site Awareness Training from a member of the service-learning staff.
- Familiarize yourself with public transportation routes. SEPTA buses and Regional Rain lines are a great ways to get to your service-learning site. When using these methods of transportation, make sure you have the phone number of your community site and extra money with you in case you need to take an unexpected bus route or call a cab.
- Never accept rides from strangers.
- Always carry a list of important phone numbers with you, including your community site contact information.

Professionalism
Remember to adhere to the proper dress code established by your community host. In addition, keep in mind the guidelines for professional communication with community agency personnel as well as community members. Remember, you are a representative of Chestnut Hill College, so it is imperative that you make a positive impression on those you come in contact with.

Materials
Check with your instructor or site supervisor in advance to see what materials you will need to successfully participate in your service activity. These materials range from child abuse and criminal background clearances to hammers and paintbrushes. You want to be fully equipped to accomplish whatever task you are assigned—and it is your responsibility to make sure that you are.

Transportation
The most common way for students to commute to service-learning sites is by public transportation. Check the SEPTA’s website, www.septa.org, for the necessary instructions on how to successfully use Port Authority busses or the T to get to your service-learning destination.

If you choose to drive your own vehicle to your service site, please keep in mind that Chestnut Hill College is not responsible for any damage done to your vehicle while on site, or any liability you incur when driving others.

Moreover, if you choose to accept rides to your service site from others, make sure that the driver has a valid driver’s license and is covered by a current automobile insurance policy. Please be aware that the Office of Service-Learning provides trip reimbursements in the form of SEPTA tokens and regional rail tickets. If you receive any type of ticket on your way to or from service, Service-Learning will not reimburse students for this expense.
Additional Resources

It is important to remember that your faculty member should be your first line of defense for questions about your service-learning experience. However, you can also utilize the following resources while participating in service-learning.

The Office of Service-Learning:

Ryan Murphy  
Director of Service-Learning  
murphyr@chc.edu  
215-248-7032

MacKenzie Lovell  
Student Life Assistant  
lovellm@chc.edu  
215-753-3695

Shane McCarthy  
Service-Learning Assistant  
mccarthysa@chc.edu  
215-753-3695

The Office of Service-Learning was established to provide support for faculty members, community organizations, and students who are involved in service-learning. You may contact the Office of Service-Learning for an official letter recognizing and documenting the effort you put forth during your time in a service-learning course or for other questions you have.

Department of Public Safety:

Ray Hallman, MBA  
Director of Safety & Campus Security  
at 215.753.3637 or hallmanr@chc.edu

OR dial 215-242-7777 for campus emergencies.

Philadelphia Area Police: 911

SEPTA: 215- 580-7800

• Online Trip Planner for Bus and Regional Rail Lines: www.septa.org

BlackBoard Site

Once enrolled in a service-learning course you become part of a service-learning BlackBoard community. This site will keep you updated on different Chestnut Hill College service projects, important dates to remember, and different tools you might need while participating in service-learning—such as this handbook. It is crucial that you become an active member of this BlackBoard community so that you receive helpful information from the Office of Service-Learning as well as be able to access the different toolkits, links, contact information, etc. necessary when participating in service-learning.