



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Silver Cord Program?

The Silver Cord Program recognizes students for their community service during their high school years. Students are recognized after volunteering 150 hours. Students volunteering 150 hours by April 30 of their senior year will have the distinct honor of wearing a silver cord during their graduation ceremony.

2. How do I begin?

- The Silver Cord Program starts August 1 of the freshman year and concludes April 30 of the senior year.
- Consider volunteer activities of interest to you or research local non-profit organizations.
- Contact the volunteer organization site to schedule and confirm your service activities.
- Remember that Silver Cord hours must meet a clearly defined NEED for an agency, church, charity program, political agency, social service, group, or community event. If there is an activity in question, you should have it pre-approved by the Silver Cord advisory team.
- Pick up a SEP Silver Cord Award Form in the Attendance Office or print [the online form](#).
- Complete your service.
- Turn in your completed Silver Cord Award Form, with ALL questions answered and ALL required signatures, to the Attendance Office. Hours in question will be reviewed by the Silver Cord Coordinator (Valerie Powell) and/or administration for approval.
- The more hours you volunteer, the closer you are to having the distinct honor of wearing a silver cord at graduation. However, the most important thing is giving something back to the community. Your service matters!

3. What about summer service?

Students may print the Silver Cord Award Form year-round. Pick up forms at the Attendance Office during the school year or [find them online](#) at the school website. Students will keep completed award forms until they return to school in the fall, or they can turn them into the Attendance Office. Summer service forms are due September 15.

4. Can I count work done in previous years? What if I am a transfer student?

Hours earned in the summer need to be turned in by September 15th of that school year. Hours earned during 1st semester need to be turned in by the end of 1st semester. Hours earned during 2nd semester must be turned in by the end of 2nd semester. Hours turned in past the deadline will not be accepted unless you receive permission from the Silver Cord Coordinator prior to the deadline.

Transfer students may still earn a Silver Cord at graduation. Total hour requirements will be prorated based on the date of enrollment at Southeast Polk High School. Transfer students must present a transfer letter to the Southeast Polk Coordinator from the previous school with the number of hours volunteered.

5. IMPORTANT things to remember:

- Volunteer work is an unpaid activity.
- Volunteering must be performed for a non-profit (501c3) organization.
- Helping family members and friends are not Silver Cord hours.
- Volunteer service cannot occur during a student's academic day.
- There is a maximum of eight volunteer hours allowed per day.
- Travel, meals and break should not be included as service hours.
- Not all good deeds are community service.

Suggested opportunities may include:

- Volunteering with community service organizations.
- Assisting elderly with household chores (shoveling, raking, etc.).
- Volunteering for special church projects and mission trips.
- Helping to improve school buildings and grounds.
- Volunteering with younger children at a day camp or activity (sports, vacation bible school, or camp counselor, etc).
- Tutoring students before or after school.
- Assisting with Special Olympics, Susan G. Komen, Meals from the Heartland or events of this nature.
- Assisting at a hospital, shelter, nursing home, or food pantry.
- Volunteering for school sponsored events you are not a participant (track meets, etc.).
- Volunteering for a political party or campaign.
- Volunteering at an animal shelter.

This list in no way encompasses ALL opportunities for service but offers you many ideas.

Non-acceptable service activities include but are not limited to:

- Helping family (related).
- Participation in self-improvement workshops, clinics.
- Service which is part of an academic, court ordered, or discipline requirement.
- Travel, meals, and breaks should not be included as service hours.
- Music or athletic practices.
- Religious Service-Silver Cord hours may not be directly involved with the rituals, services, or ceremonies of any specific religion. Examples of invalid activities include but are not limited to babysitting during religious services, special projects such as recording/videotaping a service, baptism, wedding, regular church service, funeral, etc.

6. Can I lose hours?

No. These are earned hours and cannot be taken away from a student.

7. Can I count volunteering that I do for a school organization, or schools in the Southeast Polk District?*

Students may earn up to 75 hours (total) volunteering for any Southeast Polk School organization, club, or event as long as:

- The work is “above and beyond” what is expected. For example, the hours required for National Honor Society or FFA membership will not also count as Silver Cord hours. Service projects where participation is required may count as hours toward a Silver Cord. Please check first!
- The school organization does not receive financial or any type of compensation.
- School sponsored sales/camps/clinics/invitationals that raise money (or accept donations) to benefit the school club/team is a fundraiser. No silver cord hours will be approved unless:
- The student does not belong to the team/club/organization.
- All profits from said event are donated to charity.

*Students are not required to volunteer for school activities. There is NO LIMIT to the number of hours volunteered for a non-profit organization outside of the school district.

8. Recognition

Each term, a deadline date will be announced for student recognition. If Silver Cord Award Forms are not submitted prior to this date, those hours will be recorded for the following term. The exception to this rule is for seniors. All seniors must turn in Silver Cord forms NO LATER than April 30 of the senior year. No exceptions. For specific information regarding recognition, please see the Silver Cord Program Guidelines.