

The Value of Volunteering

By Cristy Lee



Heather French Henry has been a strong and vocal supporter of military veterans.

French Foundation for Veterans?

The foundation was established in 2000 during my year as Miss America as a response to the overwhelming need of veterans. We work to provide both housing and healthcare for the veterans. Our focus is not only financial, but educational as well. We work a lot with distribution of pamphlets and also have seminars around the country to help inform Americans about how they can help disabled veterans in the U.S. We also provide assistance to others such as non-service veterans who have a hard time getting help from the Veterans Administration.

to be compassionate, and this is a humbling lesson. It's important to remember that there are some out there who can't work and that it's a privilege just to get to work. Volunteering helps you to be happier in what you do and more content with what you have. Volunteer work helps to keep things in perspective.

What has been most valuable project you were part of and what lessons have you learned through volunteering?

I would say the most valuable project I've done, by far, is working with the homeless veterans. That started with my uncle being a homeless veteran in Florida for two years. He's been through the program and is now a counselor, and it's just an amazing story. I never dreamed that a small-town girl from northern Kentucky would be able to do the things that I have gotten to do. I've been able to work with legislation for veterans, like the Homeless Veteran's Assistance Act of 2001, which is the first comprehensive legislation for veterans in history.

What would you say to teens and college students about volunteering in their local community?

Volunteering definitely enhances their education, but it also helps make the transition into life after graduation. If a student has been a participant in the local community, then after graduation, he or she will know the social protocol and politics of the community. It also helps in networking and

getting to know those in important positions, which aids in a smooth transition. Through volunteerism, we receive a lot from the community as we give back through our time and effort. 🐾



As a young Girl Scout, Heather French developed an early interest in community service.

Heather French Henry, wife of Kentucky's Lieutenant Governor Stephen Henry, M.D., and Miss America 2000, has been actively involved in volunteer work her entire life. In her time as Miss America 2000, she championed the cause of disabled American veterans and set up the Heather French Foundation for the Veterans. She grew up in Maysville, Ky., and graduated with a Bachelor of Science and a Masters of Design in Fashion Design and Illustration from the University of Cincinnati. Heather is the mother of two daughters: Harper, 2, and Taylor, who was

born in July. She is currently serving as the executive director of the Heather French Foundation for the Veterans.

How did you get your start in volunteering?

Brownies and Girl Scouts were probably the first things I participated in. Girl Scouts are always involved in volunteer projects to earn patches for the sashes or merits to go toward awards. In high school, I continued volunteering through the Beta Club, Art Club, choir and orchestra. But one thing that always held my interest was work with disabled American veterans. My dad is a disabled veteran and that's always been my real passion.

How does volunteer work enhance both education and life in general?

I always stress that education is not just a degree. It's not about just what you learn, but it's about life. It's through volunteering that you can see what life is all about. It's more than memorizing information for a test or getting that last-minute project turned in on time; it's about being able to apply what you learned to real life. In volunteering with others less fortunate, you also learn what it is



Miss America 2000 Heather French Henry

Bob Warner photo