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[Working to volunteer for society](#)

Local employees get paid to take time off from work and perform community service.

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NANTICOKE – Carl Witkowski believes in human capital – in the workplace and the community.



Carl Witkowski, Guard Insurance, W-B, said money donated by employees to dress down was donated to the historical society.

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It's why his company, Guard Insurance, lets employees perform volunteer work on company time.

Guard is one of several employers in Luzerne County that encourage their workers to dedicate time to a local charity.

Last week, Luzerne County Community College joined the ranks of volunteer-friendly employers. The college board of trustees voted to enact the Community Service Leave Program, which allows employees one day or two half-days per year to perform community service.

“For us it’s part of our fabric,” said Witkowski, the chief administrative officer at Guard Insurance. “Volunteerism is investing in your human capital, which is a company’s most valuable asset. At the same time it strengthens the community.”

Guard allows employees to volunteer their time with nonprofit agencies or participate in work-sponsored fundraisers.

On Thursday, Guard workers raised money for the Luzerne County Historical Society to restore Frances Slocum's portrait.

Witkowski said the company's founders believed it was vital to have employees help support the community. The commercial property and casualty insurance provider's employees are allowed to donate their time during office hours while donating blood, reading to school children or building a home for Habitat for Humanity.

Maureen Jordan, director of the Volunteer Action Center for the United Way of Wyoming Valley, said several companies, both large and small, allow employees time off to volunteer in the community.

Anna Mary McHugh, LCCC's special needs coordinator, said the newly enacted policy, which she helped create, will streamline the volunteer process for college employees. Once the database is synchronized with the computer system, LCCC employees will be able to research volunteer activities they would like to participate in online.

McHugh, who coordinates the annual United Way Day of Caring, said she approached LCCC President Tom Leary about the policy because she knew he was interested in promoting community outreach programs.

Leary recalled a recent Sunday when he and several of the school's top administrators spent part of the day having breakfast and talking with veterans at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Plains Township.

Since several college employees have participated in the Day of Caring for more than a decade, that will not be counted as one of the days off under the new policy. So, in essence, some employees get two days a year to volunteer their time to nonprofit agencies.

While most of the volunteer work will likely be concentrated in Luzerne County, college employees are eligible to volunteer anywhere in the facility's 11-county coverage area, Leary said.

Faculty members are encouraged to involve their students in the volunteer work as part of the college's service learning initiative.

"What we want to do is take our students and put them into environments where they are connecting with entrepreneurs, with people in the community," Leary said.