

North Linn HS Silver Cord Program

The mission of North Linn High School Silver Cord Program is to instill in students the importance of community service, life-long volunteerism, and the development of leadership skills in the community while investing in educational pursuits. North Linn students who volunteer the minimum number of hours throughout their high school career will wear a silver cord at graduation. Volunteering can provide a constructive use of time, foster the exploration of career interests, support youth who are seeking employment and college admission, and give new graduates the confidence to serve in leadership roles after high school.

When we began, the 2025 graduating senior students needed to volunteer a minimum of 40 hours. That year, 11 seniors earned the honor of wearing a silver cord during their graduation ceremony. Ten graduates in 2026 earned their cords by serving a minimum of 80 hours, and their class totalled almost 1200 hours in their two years in the program. Other grade levels will be phased-in with the number of required hours according to the schedule below.

This is a self-directed program. The student is responsible for submitting all of their hours. All summer hours count toward the next school year. 8th grade students who volunteer the summer before they enter high school can turn in those hours.

The Silver Cord Program service hours requirements will be phased-in according to the following schedule:

Class of 2027 - 120 hours minimum

Class of 2028 and beyond - 160 hours minimum

While it is suggested that students complete 40 hours of service activities per year to reach the 160 total hours, students may accumulate their 160 hours in varying amounts during their four years of high school. Any student new to the district will be pro-rated, according to the year they transfer or move into the North Linn Community School District. Silver Cord hours can also be transferred from another district's Silver Cord program with written verification of hours.

Important Guidelines:

- Once a student decides to take part in the Silver Cord Program, the Student-Parent Agreement form must be completed prior to beginning any activity, and returned to Ms. DeVore.
- Student organization hours for service projects can be used toward the Silver Cord program, with the approval of that organization's advisor. All volunteer hours must be unpaid.
- Organization or club meetings do not count.
- All hours must be documented on a Service Verification Form, which is also signed by that organization's representative above the age of 21.
- Parents cannot sign documentation forms unless approved in advance.
- Verification forms must be turned in to Ms. DeVore within three months of completion of the activity, prior to the May 1st deadline for seniors.
- The student should not volunteer more than eight (8) hours in a day.
- Volunteer hours cannot be completed during the school day unless approved by administration, such as school organization service hours.
- Strict adherence to ineligible activities as listed on page 2.

How the Program Works:

The Silver Cord Program starts the first day of summer vacation between 8th and 9th grade, and concludes May 1st of 12th grade. Silver Cord hours must meet a clearly defined need for an agency, charity program, church, 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 Committee. 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!

Examples of Eligible Activities (these activities must be *unpaid*):

- Daycare for associate staff on Professional Development days
- Mentoring/Tutoring (Paw Pals)
- Reading to youth
- Field/Grounds/Playground clean-up
- Community beautification or clean-up project
- Community Events
- Serving as an unpaid counselor at a camp
- Coaching younger students in a sport or activity
- Fundraising events for non-profit organizations
- Refereeing youth sports
- Helping at an animal shelter
- Political party/campaign work
- Helping at a childcare facility
- Helping at the library story hour, summer reading program
- Church service activities, such as -
 - Mission trips - only for service hours worked
 - Teaching Sunday School
 - Teaching/Helping at Vacation Bible School
- Assisting at hospitals, nursing homes, adult day care
- Helping with 4-H camps
- Scouting service activities
- Assisting/Helping with Special Olympics
- Volunteering for school sponsored activities

Examples of Ineligible Activities:

- Travel time to and from volunteer activity
- Work, fundraising, or other activities for Prom or Post-Prom
- Internship hours done for credit through school
- Court/school ordered activity
- Anything that is paid
- Extracurricular activities
- Fundraising for yourself/school/school organizations
- Attending church, Confirmation classes, or Sunday School
- Babysitting for siblings

If you are unsure whether the volunteer activity is acceptable, check with Ms. DeVore or Ms. J. Schmidt prior to beginning. Hours in question will be reviewed for approval. Any disputed hours between the student and Silver Cord organizers will be further reviewed by Administration.