

Love thy neighbor. Or else.

The costs of the welfare state are becoming so high in Sweden that a study group in that country has recommended compelling citizens to help their neighbors. The government, in its view, should levy not just taxes but also time—probably four to six hours per week from every adult to assist the less fortunate. We doubt that Sweden can attain by social compulsion what most Americans take in with the air they breathe: an ideal of community service.

Whether American youngsters should be required to serve their communities has sparked a lot of debate. Some say the young are expected to learn arithmetic and that service to others is no less important. Others say "compulsory service" is a contradiction in terms: true service is always voluntary. Perhaps the solution lies in homes and schools where service is as natural a part of standards as good performance in math.

One such place is The Baldwin School in Pennsylvania—an independent, not-for-profit school that enrolls almost 500 young women from kindergarten through senior high. Baldwin actively pursues a highly diverse student body, with more than 11 percent of the students receiving financial assistance. The youngest, in Lower School, learn about community by helping keep the campus clean and collecting canned goods for poor families. Girls in Middle School conduct fund-raising efforts for groups like the United Way; they bring gifts to and perform music for members of a nearby retirement community. Older students in the Upper School take part in similar efforts but also devise their own programs of service. One student invited

several classmates to accompany her on a visit to a center for autistic children; the group then asked the center's director to address Baldwin students—and now seven seniors go once a week to work with autistic children at the center.

Head of the School Blair Stambaugh says young people have a natural tendency toward service to others—all they need from adults are opportunities for this tendency to grow and flourish. Her school is the best evidence that she's right. Baldwin is also a powerful demonstration of the importance of independent schools to this nation's educational life. These schools are exemplars of diversity and innovation, and do an excellent job in preparing students for higher education; most now enroll a broad range of students from almost every social and minority group.

Results like these have prompted more and more corporations to include independent schools such as Baldwin in their matching gift programs, in which a company teams up with its employees to match their personal gifts to educational and philanthropic causes. Mobil Foundation started matching such gifts on a two-for-one basis several years ago, and Mobil has been urging other companies to do the same. We'd say Baldwin is a continual demonstration that you don't need the stick to make good neighbors.

For counsel on how to start or improve a matching gifts program at your company—or how to expand it to independent schools—get in touch with: Matching Gift Program, CASE, 11 Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036; phone (202) 328-5900.

Thy neighbor will love you.

Mobil

INDEPENDENT SECTOR
Memo to Members
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