



EARNED TUITION

SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2025 – 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Impact Supporter,

The 2025–2026 Impact Program year stands as a powerful reminder of what is possible when students, families, schools, nonprofit organizations, and our community come together around a shared vision. Every volunteer hour, every partnership, and every student success story reflects a collective investment in the future of the Sauk Valley.

This year, 1,873 Impact students participated in the program, and 85% successfully completed their commitment of at least 25 volunteer hours. Together, they contributed an incredible 46,920 hours of service throughout our region. These hours represent far more than a program requirement—they represent compassion in action, stronger communities, meaningful workforce experiences, and students discovering the value of giving back.

One of the greatest strengths of the Impact Program is the remarkable network of more than 300 nonprofit organizations, schools, places of worship, and community partners that welcome our students. These partnerships provide students with opportunities to develop leadership, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills while making a meaningful difference in others' lives. At the same time, our community benefits from thousands of hours of volunteer service that strengthen organizations and improve quality of life throughout the Sauk Valley.

The Impact Program continues to demonstrate that investing in students creates lasting returns for our entire region. By connecting volunteer service with an earned tuition pathway at Sauk Valley Community College, we are removing financial barriers to higher education while preparing students to become engaged citizens, skilled professionals, and future community leaders.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our students and families, the commitment of our K–12 school partners, the generosity of our donors, and the unwavering support of our nonprofit and community organizations. Your belief in this mission continues to transform lives and strengthen our region.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to expanding opportunities, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that every student has the opportunity to serve, succeed, and thrive. Thank you for being part of this journey and for helping us build a brighter future for the Sauk Valley.



With gratitude,
Ashleigh Sorenson
Executive Director of Student
Recruiting & Impact Program
Sauk Valley Community College

Impact Program (District-Wide)

over 300 Volunteer Partners	Volunteer Partners – Participating Nonprofits
over 125,000 hours	Total Volunteer Hours Completed by Impact Students since June 1, 2022
46,920 hours	Total Volunteer Hours Completed 2025–2026 by Impact Students
1,873 students	Total Students Registered for the 2026–2027 Impact Year

85% of Impact Students District-Wide Completed at Least 25 Volunteer Hours and Persisted to the 2026–2027 Program Year



The Impact Team (listed left to right): Sarah Partington, Lyndsey Kelly: Student Recruiting and Impact Program Coordinators, Kenneth Burn: Foundation Coordinator, Ashleigh Sorenson: Executive Director of Student Recruiting & Impact Program, Marlee Oros: Student Recruiting and Impact Specialist, Lori Cortez, Ed.D.: Vice President of Advancement

Executive Summary: A Year of Transformative Growth

The SVCC Impact Program continues to redefine the educational landscape of the Sauk Valley region, bridging the gap between community service and college access. This past year was defined by record-breaking engagement, with over 125,000 cumulative volunteer hours served since the pilot program's inception in 2021. Our dual-purpose mission—to empower students through service and to revitalize our local economy—has reached new heights, evidenced by a 97% satisfaction rate among participants and their families. From the launch of our custom technology platform to the full funding of five regional high schools, the Impact Program is proving that when we invest in our youth, the entire community rises.

635 students High School Freshmen in 2026

60 students Tiered Tuition Students (Sophomores–Seniors) in 2026

695 students 695 New Students Who Are on Their Way to Earning Tuition in 2026!

Approx. 40% of In-District High School Students Have Participated in the Impact Program

232 Impact students are enrolled at Sauk Valley Community College for the Fall 2026 semester.

This marks the first semester that the Impact scholarship opportunity was available to students district-wide.

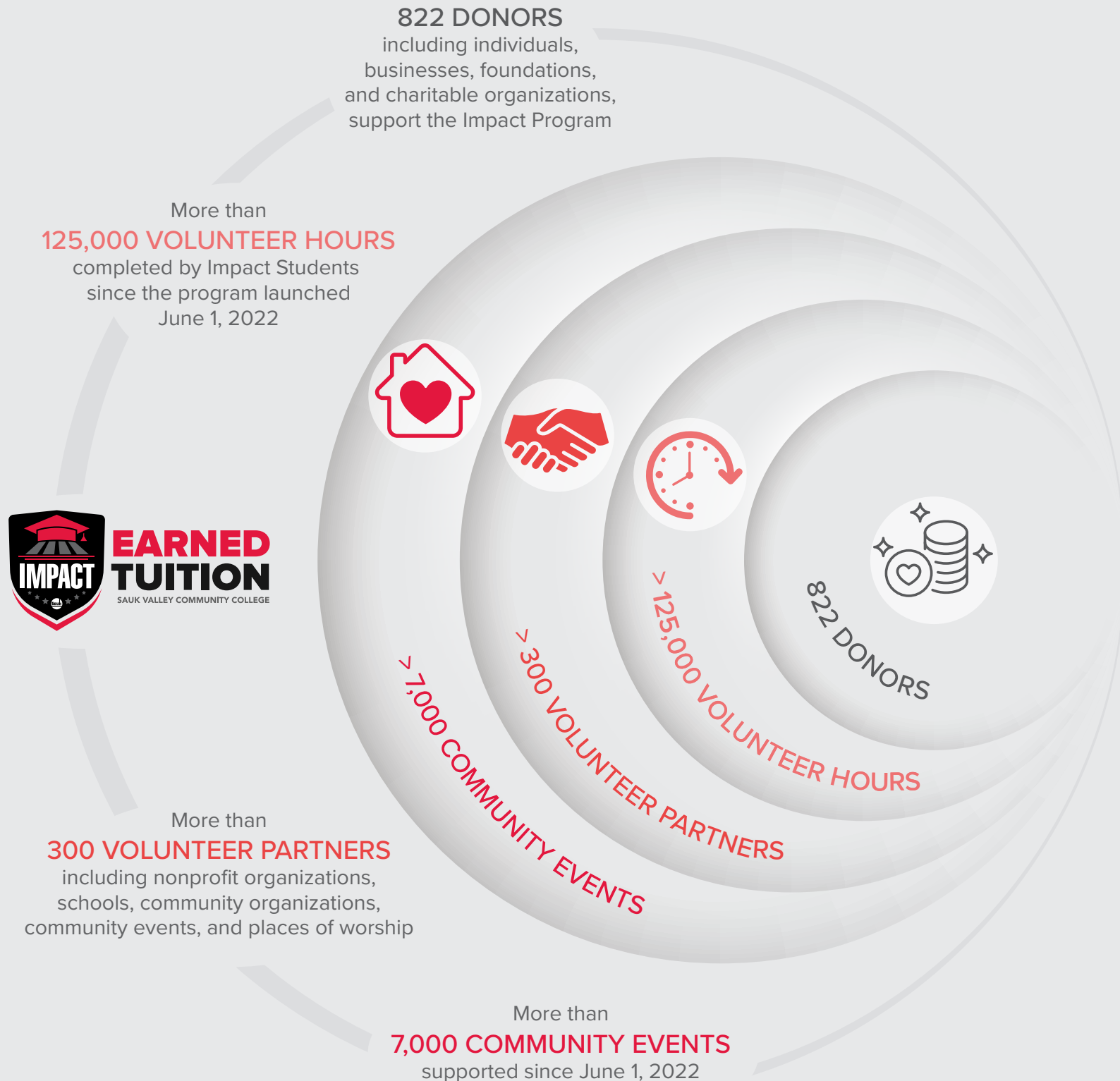
Among Impact students enrolled for Fall 2026 with declared majors, 93% are pursuing fields in the following high demand occupations:

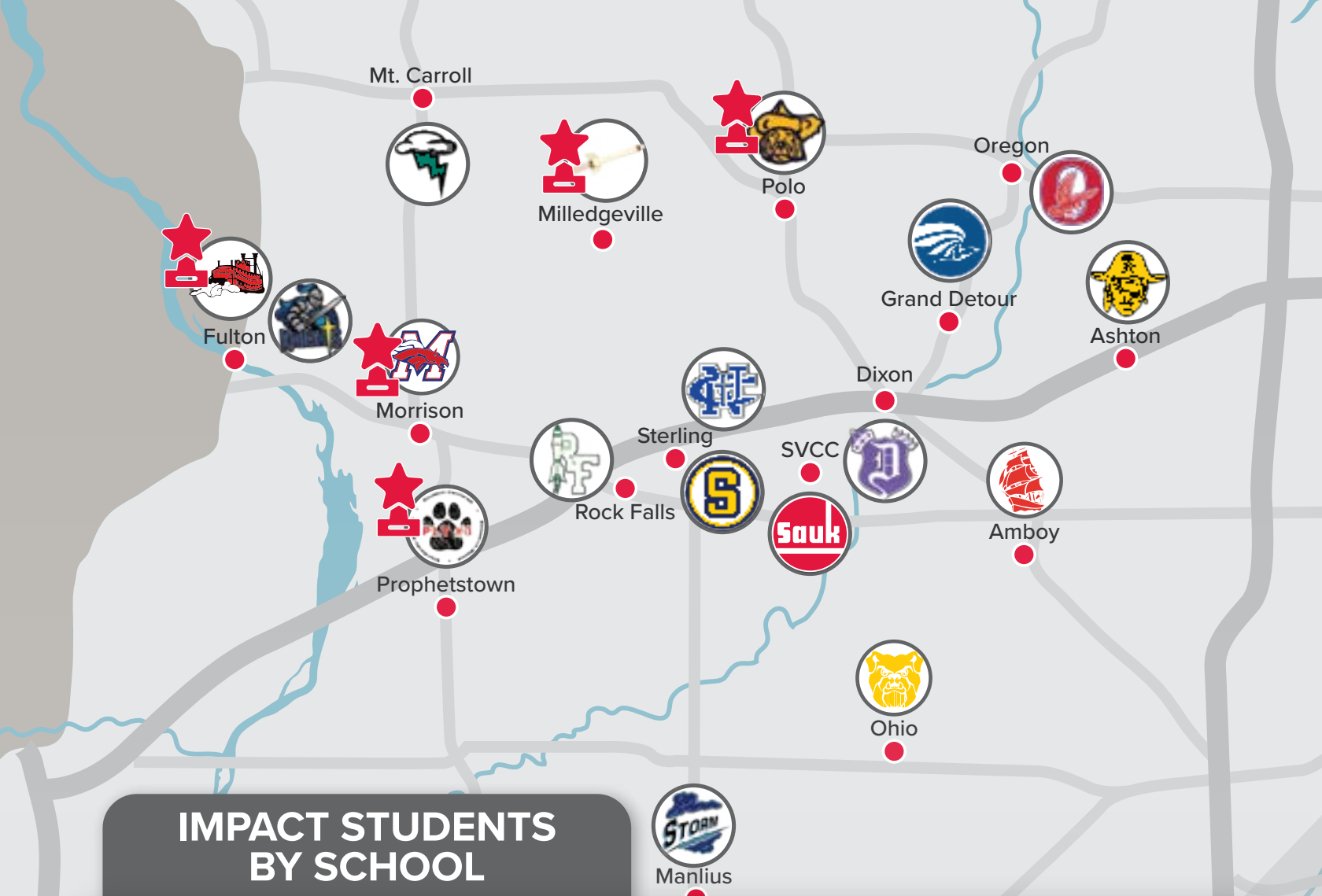
- Agriculture
- Business/Accounting
- Manufacturing/skilled trades
- CDL
- Technology
- Education
- Healthcare

Among current Impact students, 29 are pursuing nursing programs alone.

Community Impact

One of the most powerful aspects of the Impact Program is its ripple effect, which initiates positive, sustainable change. Our donors empower Impact students, who in turn support our volunteer partners and local community events. Together, these efforts help create thriving Sauk Valley communities.





IMPACT STUDENTS BY SCHOOL

AFC High School		63 students	4,287 total volunteer hours
Amboy High School		93 students	6,206 total volunteer hours
Bureau Valley High School		82 students	5,514 total volunteer hours
Dixon High School		274 students	19,282 total volunteer hours
Faith Christian High School		48 students	3,679 total volunteer hours
Fulton High School		121 students	9,454 total volunteer hours
Milledgeville High School		60 students	3,910 total volunteer hours
Morrison High School		137 students	8,876 total volunteer hours
Newman Central Catholic High School		104 students	7,438 total volunteer hours
Ohio High School		11 students	704 total volunteer hours
Oregon High School		82 students	5,972 total volunteer hours
Polo High School		79 students	7,188 total volunteer hours
Prophetstown High School		72 students	5,529 total volunteer hours
Rock Falls High School		175 students	12,728 total volunteer hours
Sterling High School		369 students	23,183 total volunteer hours
Unity Christian High School		21 students	1,310 total volunteer hours
West Carroll High School		34 students	2,258 total volunteer hours
Homeschool			5,975 total volunteer hours

FULLY FUNDED SCHOOLS



POLO
\$600,000 / \$600,000



**FULLY
FUNDED**



MILLEDGEVILLE
\$500,000 / \$500,000



**FULLY
FUNDED**

WEAVER SCHOLARS



FULTON
\$500,000 / \$500,000



**FULLY
FUNDED**

HUISINGH SCHOLARS



PROPHETSTOWN
\$500,000 / \$500,000



**FULLY
FUNDED**



MORRISON
\$450,000 / \$450,000



**FULLY
FUNDED**

TOP VOLUNTEER PARTNERS BY SCHOOL



Teen Turf



Dixon Family YMCA



de Immigrant Wind Mill



Open Door Community Church



Prophetstown High School



Coleta Sportsmens Club



Serenity Hospice and Home



Franklin Grove Area Historical Society Chaplin Creek Village



Walnut Public Library District



Mt. Carroll Farmers Market by Mt. Carroll Chamber



First Presbyterian Church of Morrison



Harvest Time Bible Church



Rock River Christian Camp

Why the Impact Program Matters: Strengthening Our Roots

The Impact Program was born from a visionary goal by the Sauk Valley College Foundation: to combat the demographic and economic challenges facing our rural communities. By addressing population decline and workforce shortages head-on, we are creating a sustainable future. This program is more than a scholarship; it is a strategic investment in the people who will shape our community's future. By encouraging students to stay local and engage deeply with their neighbors, we are building an educated, civically minded workforce prepared to lead the Sauk Valley into its next chapter of prosperity.



Like many rural communities across Illinois, the Sauk Valley continues to face significant demographic and economic challenges:

- **Population decline:** The Sauk Valley Community College district has experienced a sustained population decline over the past decade, resulting in fewer high school graduates and a shrinking workforce.
- **Workforce shortages:** Local employers continue to report difficulty finding qualified workers as retirements outpace the number of new workers entering the labor force. Workforce development remains one of the region's greatest needs. *Workforce data identify approximately 461 annual openings for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, 319 for nursing assistants, 253 for registered nurses, and more than 160 for industrial machinery mechanics and maintenance workers.*
- **Educational attainment:** Increasing the number of residents with postsecondary education or workforce credentials is critical to attracting and retaining employers while increasing household incomes. *The number of residents with an associate degree is projected to increase from 14,923 in 2025 to 15,540 in 2030.*

These trends affect nearly every aspect of community life. They influence the strength of our workforce, the health of local businesses, the sustainability of schools, the availability of community services, and ultimately the quality of life throughout the Sauk Valley.

The Impact Solution

The Impact Program was intentionally designed to address regional challenges through four interconnected goals:

DEVELOP AN EDUCATED WORKFORCE

By removing financial barriers to college, more students can earn certificates and degrees that prepare them for careers in demand by local employers.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO STAY LOCAL

Students who attend Sauk Valley Community College are more likely to live, work, and contribute to the regional economy after graduation, helping build a stronger local workforce.

STRENGTHEN THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

An educated workforce, higher educational attainment, increased volunteerism, and stronger community connections all contribute to economic growth and a higher quality of life throughout the Sauk Valley.

BUILD A CULTURE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Requiring students to complete volunteer service each year creates meaningful connections with hundreds of nonprofit organizations, schools, churches, and community events while fostering a lifelong commitment to service.



Student Success Story





Paige Ledergerber

I am 18 years old and starting my freshman year of college. I really enjoy puzzles, working with others on school projects, and working around my community. I went to the Whiteside Area Career Center my junior year of high school to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). I will be enrolling in the Radiologic Technology program to further my career in healthcare at Sauk Valley Community College.

I have met so many new friends and leaders through the Impact Program. I've had the opportunity to help with pancake breakfasts, build Fourth of July floats, and participate in many more activities alongside the Rotary Club in Walnut. I put in countless hours helping the Walnut Public Library and really enjoy helping out the future leaders of Walnut. I've also had the opportunity to talk with the next group of children who will be joining the Impact Program. I explained to them how important it is to get out into your community and help out when needed. I made a point to mention that they should not always wait to be asked to do something, but rather go out into the community, find someone or something that needs help, and jump right in.

Before the Impact Program, I was nervous about trying new things and talking to new people. After volunteering in my community for the past five years, I no longer get nervous about going up to someone new and starting a conversation. I feel more confident walking into a new place, and I have learned how to go with the flow. I speak up for those who are nervous and show them that it is not as scary or intimidating as they might think. Being able to walk into a room and feel confident, or walk up to someone new and hold a good conversation, is a very important step when starting new things like college or a new job. These are skills everyone should have to stand out in a room.

"I've also had the opportunity to talk with the next group of children who will be joining the Impact Program. I explained to them how important it is to get out into your community and help out when needed. I made a point to mention that they should not always wait to be asked to do something, but rather go out into the community, find someone or something that needs help, and jump right in."

Quinn Stahr

I'm Quinn Stahr, a recent graduate of Rock Falls High School. I have been very involved in theatre for nearly my whole life and hope to pursue film and theatre as a career. At Sauk, I plan to complete my general education requirements so that I can transfer to another school and fully focus on my career.

The Impact Program has been easy and great to work with, and I'm glad it has given me the freedom to earn tuition in fun ways like painting houses with my friends or running the technical side of theatre productions. Many of my volunteer hours came from assisting with and developing skills in the technical side of theatre, which are a big part of both film and theatre careers.

I was torn between attending a 4-year school or attending Sauk first. The Impact Program heavily influenced my final decision. Although I had a fairly good financial aid package for the 4-year school I was looking at, I was not entirely sure if I wanted to attend that school. In the end, I decided it would have been a worse decision for my career to turn down my 100% free education at Sauk.

Film equipment and schooling can be quite expensive, so the opportunity to save money by attending Sauk for free will help me afford better education and equipment in the future.

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Student Success Story



TOP 10 VOLUNTEER PARTNERS*

SAWMILL MUSEUM
(Fulton District)



1,516 HOURS

TEEN TURF
Amboy, IL



1,288 HOURS

DIXON FAMILY YMCA
Dixon, IL



1,063 HOURS

**DE IMMIGRANT
WIND MILL**
Fulton, IL



965 HOURS

**THE DIXON
HISTORIC THEATRE**
Dixon, IL



965 HOURS

**REAGAN
MIDDLE SCHOOL**
(Dixon Public Schools)
Dixon, IL



843 HOURS

**DIXON CHAMBER
AND MAIN STREET**
Dixon, IL



832 HOURS

DIXON PARK DISTRICT
Dixon, IL



824 HOURS

**OPEN DOOR
COMMUNITY CHURCH**
Sterling, IL



806 HOURS

**PROPHETSTOWN
HIGH SCHOOL**
Prophetstown, IL



603 HOURS

**by hours hosted*

Volunteer Experiences That Prepare Students for Life and Work

The Impact Program offers students far more than an opportunity to earn volunteer hours—it provides meaningful, hands-on experiences that help prepare them for college, careers, and lifelong community engagement.

Through the Impact Program's volunteer network, students have access to hundreds of volunteer opportunities with more than 300 nonprofit organizations, schools, community organizations, places of worship, and community events throughout the Sauk Valley region and beyond. Opportunities are available year-round through the online Impact Event Calendar, making it easy for students to find experiences that fit their schedules, interests, and future career goals.



Students contribute in a wide variety of roles, including:

- Assisting teachers and mentoring younger students through local schools and youth programs
- Supporting healthcare and senior service organizations by helping with activities, events, and community outreach
- Assisting food pantries, clothing drives, and social service agencies that address essential community needs
- Helping museums, libraries, historical societies, and arts organizations preserve and share local history and culture
- Serving at community festivals, fundraising events, races, and celebrations that bring residents together
- Supporting parks, conservation projects, and beautification efforts that enhance the quality of life throughout the region
- Assisting nonprofit organizations with event setup, registration, hospitality, administrative support, marketing, and special projects

These experiences allow students to explore different industries and career pathways while developing the professional skills employers value most. Through volunteering, students strengthen their communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, problem-solving, customer service, organizational, and time-management skills. They also learn the importance of professionalism, accountability, and serving others, qualities that translate directly into success in both college and the workplace.

Many students discover career interests through their volunteer experiences, building relationships with local organizations and professionals who often become mentors, references, or future employers. Whether a student plans to pursue healthcare, education, business, manufacturing, public service, or another high-demand field, the Impact Program provides opportunities to gain practical experience while making a meaningful difference in the community.

By connecting students with real-world experiences long before they enter the workforce, the Impact Program helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and career readiness.



Transfer
or Enter the
Workforce

Graduate
from SV

Welcome Skyhawk!

THRIVE

Apply for
Scholarship

Complete
FAFSA

Volunteer

SENIOR

Set Goals
for Life After
High School

Explore
Post-Secondary
Opportunities

Volunteer

JUNIOR

Build Skills,
Experience, &
Community
Connection

Stay
Engaged

Volunteer

SOPHOMORE

GRO

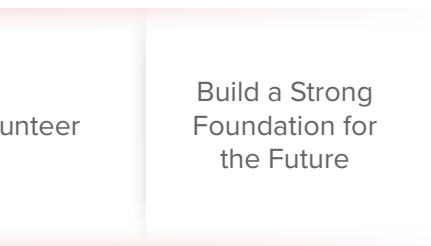
START

FRESHMAN

Join the
Impact Program

Vol

IMPACT STUDENT JOURNEY



What Impact Students Say About The Impact Program



“My favorite part about volunteering is serving and helping my community to make it better. Because I have pride in my community, volunteering is a great way to support and give back.” - Jack Delhotal



“The best part about volunteering is probably how rewarding it feels knowing that I’m contributing my time to help others.” - Maddex Moeller



“The best part about volunteering is meeting new people and hanging out with friends while I earn my tuition.” - Zackary Wiggim



“The best part about volunteering is meeting and interacting with new people. I've met tons of volunteers who love to help out just as much as I do. Everyone is so nice, and it's great to see so many familiar faces now whenever I volunteer!” - Hannah Bass



“I would tell other students that the Impact Program is an amazing way to get your tuition covered, and I am so thankful that it exists. I would say it's a great way to get more involved in the community, and it teaches you life skills that you will use in any future career.” - Ava McFalls



“Throughout the Impact Program, I have learned the value in serving others. I have found reward in stretching myself out of my comfort zone.” - Iris Williams



“I would tell other students that are in the program to stick with it because it will be worth the hours that you put in!” - Dawson Deets



“My community has given me different programs and activities that I've been able to go to as a child, and now I'm able to give by volunteering and helping them.” - Claire DeRycke



“Volunteering is a rewarding experience and provides an opportunity to earn college tuition. You should sign up and participate in the program regardless of whether you intend to go to Sauk because it's a great way to give back to the community.” - Anna Propheter



“For me, the best part about volunteering has been helping kids and seeing the smiles on their faces as they learn new skills at the summer sports camps. I like to think that by volunteering, I am helping to contribute to the greater good of society, whether it's within my own community or somewhere else.” - Jillian Anderson



“My family really feels it's important to give back to our community, and through the Impact Program, I have found new ways to help out. The jobs aren't always easy, but the hard work is worth the time it takes.” - Andrew Fletcher



“The best part of volunteering is knowing that I can help my community. There is always someone less fortunate than I am, and I have a bleeding heart. I also love knowing that even though my volunteering will benefit me, I can always make a relationship with an organization and volunteer without taking the reward.” - Rylee Custer



“Through the Impact Program, I have not only had the chance to help my community, but I have also had an opportunity to explore different career paths. I've learned about the structure of several organizations in my community, and I have seen how many people it takes to run the programs and events I participated in when I was younger.” - Evan Melton



“The Impact Program is more than volunteer hours—it's a chance to grow as a person, build meaningful connections, and truly understand what it means to serve. It's an opportunity to learn about yourself and your community in ways that can shape your future. I've gained new perspectives, lifelong lessons, and memories I'll always be proud of.” - Adan Oquendo



“The best part about volunteering is being able to give back to the community. I have learned that service to others is a crucial part of community building.” - Emmanuel Arreola



“The best part about volunteering with the Impact Program is how involved it lets me be in my community. If I hadn't started volunteering, I wouldn't know about many of the events happening in my town. Being involved helps me feel connected and encourages me to continue volunteering.” - Caitlin Nolte

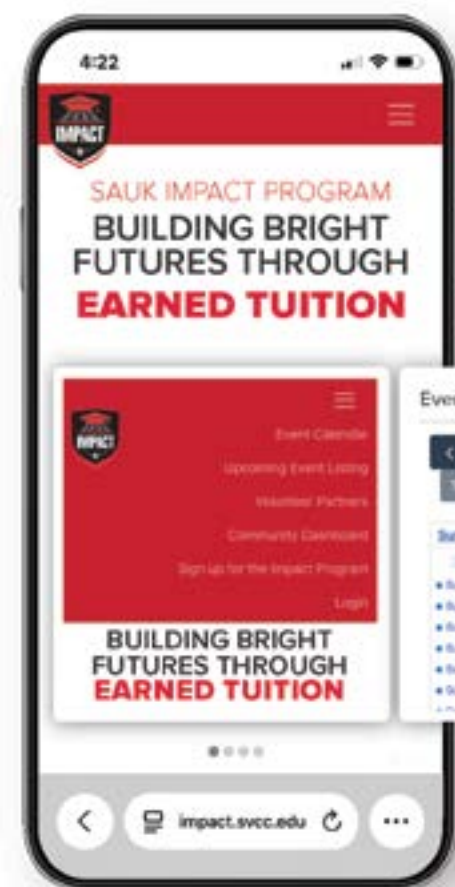


“I would highly suggest participating in the Impact Program because it's a great opportunity to better your future.” - Bailey Dusing

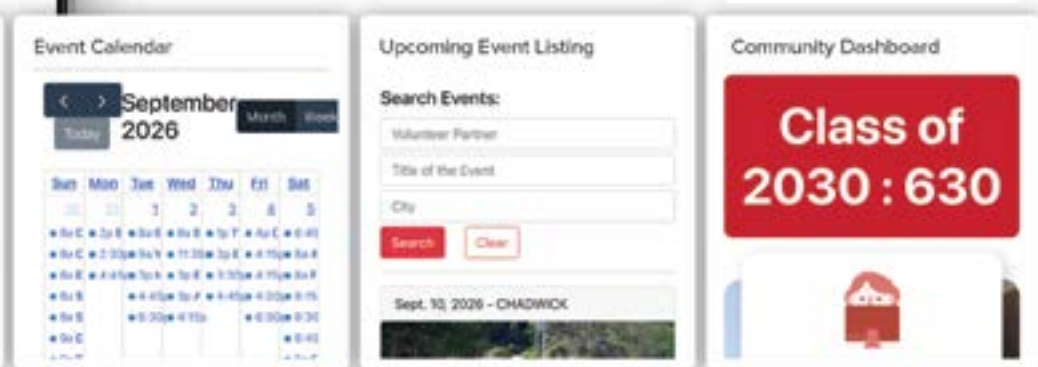
Technology Supporting Growth

As the Impact Program grew, so did the need for a more efficient way to support students, volunteer partners, and administrators. What began with students submitting volunteer hours through a simple Google Form quickly evolved into something much larger.

In partnership with Sauk Valley Community College's Information & Planning Department, the College developed impact.svcc.edu—a custom platform built specifically for the Impact Program.



Impact.svcc.edu has transformed how students complete program requirements, allowing them to track volunteer hours, search for volunteer opportunities, monitor their progress, and access important resources in one place.



Volunteer partners can post opportunities and verify hours online, while administrators benefit from automated reporting and streamlined processes.

Program Growth

The continued development of impact.svcc.edu has been essential to supporting the program's growth, allowing the Impact Program to expand while maintaining a high level of service, accuracy, and accountability.

2021	Impact's pilot program launches and volunteer hours tracked using Google Forms.
2022	Partnership with IT begins to build a custom management platform and impact.svcc.edu launches with student accounts and volunteer partner tools.
2023	Automated reporting and additional student requirement tracking added.
2025–2026	Platform expanded to include FAFSA tracking, scholarship application status, enhanced reporting, and new communication tools.

Scholarship Impact

The Impact Program is built on a last-dollar scholarship model, ensuring that eligible students can attend Sauk Valley Community College with little to no out-of-pocket cost for tuition and mandatory fees. After federal, state, and institutional financial aid is applied, the Impact Scholarship covers any remaining balance for tuition and required fees. This approach maximizes existing financial aid while removing one of the greatest barriers to higher education, college affordability.

By covering tuition and mandatory fees, the Impact Program allows students to begin their college education without taking on unnecessary debt. Students and families can focus on academic and career success rather than the financial burden of paying for college.



For Illinois community college students, reducing or eliminating the need for student loans can have a lasting impact. Students who graduate with little or no debt are better positioned to transfer to a four-year institution, enter the workforce, purchase a home, start a business, or invest in their future without the burden of loan repayment. By making higher education more affordable, the Impact Program strengthens both individual financial well-being and the long-term economic vitality of the Sauk Valley region.



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SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE



POLO
\$600,000 / \$600,000



FULLY FUNDED



MILLEDGEVILLE
\$500,000 / \$500,000



FULLY FUNDED

WEAVER SCHOLARS



FULTON
\$500,000 / \$500,000



FULLY FUNDED



PROPHETSTOWN
\$500,000 / \$500,000



FULLY FUNDED

HUISINGH SCHOLARS



MORRISON
\$450,000 / \$450,000



FULLY FUNDED

AMBOY
\$351,783 / \$600,000



NEWMAN
\$200,000 / \$600,000



DIXON
\$156,035 / \$2,000,000



ASHTON FRANKLIN CENTER
\$130,000 / \$500,000



ROCK FALLS
\$120,000 / \$2,000,000



STERLING
\$96,607 / \$2,000,000



BUREAU VALLEY
\$36,203 / \$600,000



OREGON
\$25,000 / \$600,000



FAITH CHRISTIAN
\$100 / \$100,000



OHIO
\$0 / \$250,000



Some schools are fully funded.
Others still need your support.
Your donation makes an impact.
Give today.
815.835.6260 • svcc.edu/give





EARNED TUITION

SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

IMPACT PROGRAM COMMUNITY DASHBOARD

As of September 18, 2026



2,234

Students Enrolled



139,277

Total Volunteer Hours Completed

IMPACT!

Impact
Students
are
Volunteering at

296

Non-profit
Agencies

\$9,438,420

Raised



916

Donors (Including Businesses
and Charitable Organizations)



93%

Of Impact Students Enrolled
at SVCC Are Majoring in High-Demand Occupations*



A Message from the Sauk Valley College Foundation

Dear Friends,

When we launched the Impact Program, we set out to accomplish something many believed was impossible: create a future where every local student willing to serve their community could earn a college education tuition-free.

Today, because of generous supporters like you, that vision is no longer just an aspiration; it is a reality. Every day, thousands of Impact students are strengthening our communities through volunteer service. They are assisting in schools, supporting food pantries, serving places of worship, helping senior citizens, improving parks, and lending their time to hundreds of nonprofit organizations throughout the Sauk Valley. In return, they are earning something priceless: the opportunity to pursue a college education without the burden of tuition.

That is the true power of Impact.

Your generosity does far more than pay for scholarships. It invests in the future workforce of our region. Today's Impact students will become tomorrow's nurses, teachers, manufacturers, first responders, entrepreneurs, farmers, business owners, and community leaders. They will care for our families, strengthen our local economy, and continue the tradition of giving back that defines our communities. Here in the Sauk Valley, we believe in serving our neighbors and our communities. We believe that when a community invests in its young people, everyone benefits.

What makes me most proud is that this program reflects the very best of who we are. Yet our work is not finished. Every new donor brings us closer to permanently endowing the Impact Program so future generations of students will always have the opportunity to earn a tuition-free education through community service. We are building a legacy that will outlive all of us—one measured not simply by dollars raised, but by lives changed, communities strengthened, and generations inspired.

If you have already invested in this vision, thank you. You are changing lives every single day. If you are considering your first gift, I invite you to join us. Thank you for believing in our students and in the future of the Sauk Valley.



Gratefully,
Lori Cortez, Ed.D.
Vice President of Advancement
Sauk Valley Community College
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SVCC Impact Program



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