

**THIS IS ONEIDA  
THE VALUE OF WORK**

My father loved to raise a large garden every summer. In reality, I probably did very little work in my dad's garden, but as a kid it seemed like I worked many long, hot days picking beans, hoeing weeds, etc. I hated working in that garden, but sure didn't mind eating all the fresh vegetables that it produced. I remember my grandmother coming down from Lawrenceburg every year about the time school was starting and canning beans and other items. She worked all of us to death, or so I thought.

I would like to think I was a pretty good kid growing up and didn't get into very much trouble, but I can recall one particular time when my father was none too pleased with me. My dad left town for a day or two and had instructed me to hoe the entire garden while he was gone. I did a little work while he was gone, but not anywhere near what my father expected of me. To this day I hate for any job or task to be left undone. Perhaps that stems from my experience of leaving hoeing the garden undone.

Things slow down somewhat in the summer at Oneida, but in the four weeks that followed our school year we had 74 students on our campus taking part in our work program. We then have a six-week summer school session that follows our work program. Those work program students were on scholarship during the year and were working for the school to help earn their scholarships. I watched these students clean buildings, strip and wax floors, paint dormitories, mow grass, work on the farm, work in our kitchen, and much, much more.

I am sure most of those students would have preferred to be home with family and friends enjoying the first part of their summer break, but most of them performed the tasks they were given with a good attitude. There are many parts of my job that I enjoy tremendously, but there are also tasks I wish I didn't have to do. We had to have a few conversations with some kids who did not want to do the jobs assigned to them, and when we did we took the opportunity to explain to them that their job after they finish school may also require tasks they don't particularly like.

Even during the school year, our students are required to work. Students must have a job in which they work an hour a day after school or be a part of a varsity sport. Oneida employs no custodians. Our young people handle the cleaning of our buildings and care of our grounds. Perhaps one of the most underrated skills learned by our students is the value of honest, hard work. Our students are taught to be on time for work, to get along well with their co-workers, and to do jobs to the best of their ability even when the job is not something they particularly enjoy doing.

There is no substitute for a good work ethic. Those hot summer days in my dad's garden taught me something about hard work. I am not sure when I would find the time to do it, but perhaps I should raise a garden and put my three children to work picking beans and hoeing weeds.



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*First printed in the Western Recorder July 15, 2014.  
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