

Weaving Connection Through Service: Creating Boondoggle Keychains for Switzerland

Service can take many forms, some highly visible and others quiet and personal. In preparation for an upcoming trip to Switzerland this summer, I contributed to a meaningful service activity by creating handmade boondoggle keychains to share with the individuals we will meet. This activity did not occur at a single scheduled event, but rather over multiple days and times, primarily in my bedroom and occasionally while riding the bus. Despite its informal setting, the experience proved to be a valuable example of how small, consistent efforts can contribute to a larger purpose.



Busy between shifts

My involvement in this activity was self-driven and required personal discipline and time management. I spent several evenings in my bedroom working on the keychains, as well as utilizing otherwise unproductive time during bus rides to continue weaving them. The repetitive

yet intricate process of creating each keychain demanded focus, patience, and attention to detail. While the setting may have seemed ordinary, the intention behind the work transformed it into a meaningful act of service. Each completed keychain represented not only a finished product, but also a personal contribution to building connections with others across cultures.\

This experience can be understood through the lens of a student-engaged learning (SEL) model, which emphasizes active participation, reflection, and real-world application. Rather than passively learning about service or cultural exchange, I was directly involved in creating something tangible that would be used in a real-world interaction. The activity required me to take initiative, manage my own time, and remain committed to a goal without external supervision. In this way, I was not only practicing a skill but also developing qualities such as responsibility, persistence, and self-motivation. The act of producing something for others reinforced the idea that learning is most impactful when it is connected to meaningful action. Additionally, this activity highlighted the importance of intentionality in service. While making boondoggle keychains might appear simple, the deeper purpose was to foster goodwill and create a small but memorable connection with the people we will meet in Switzerland. This aligns with key principles of student-engaged learning, particularly the idea that even small contributions can have a broader social impact. By participating in this activity, I became more aware of how thoughtful preparation can enhance cross-cultural experiences and demonstrate respect and appreciation for others.

Several important lessons emerged from this experience. First, I learned the value of consistency. Completing multiple keychains required sustained effort over time, reinforcing the idea that meaningful outcomes are often the result of small, repeated actions. Second, I developed greater patience, as the process could be time-consuming and occasionally frustrating. However,

working through these challenges helped me build resilience and maintain focus on the larger purpose of the activity. Third, I gained a deeper appreciation for service that is done behind the scenes. Not all contributions are public or immediately recognized, but they are still essential to the success of a collective effort.



And there's the finished product

Reflecting on this experience, I recognize that my contribution, though modest, plays a role in creating a positive and welcoming atmosphere for our upcoming interactions abroad. The keychains serve as a symbol of effort, care, and intentional connection. This activity also helped me feel more personally invested in the trip, as I am not simply attending but actively contributing to the experience. It has shifted my perspective on service, showing me that

meaningful impact does not always require large-scale actions; sometimes, it is found in small, thoughtful gestures.

In conclusion, creating boondoggle keychains for our trip to Switzerland was more than just a craft activity—it was an exercise in service, discipline, and engaged learning. Through consistent effort in informal settings like my bedroom and on the bus, I was able to contribute to a larger goal while developing valuable personal skills. This experience demonstrated how student-engaged learning can take place outside of traditional environments and reinforced the importance of intentional, meaningful participation in service activities. Ultimately, it showed me that even the simplest actions can help build connections that extend far beyond their immediate context.

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