



4-H Community Service

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The Purpose of Community Service:

Community-based organizations have a lot to gain by using service-learning principles and practices in their programming. This handout highlights what quality community-based service learning is and how to develop and sustain community service learning opportunities.

Difference between Community Service and Citizenship

Citizenship is character education, solving community problems, government related, and developing public spirit character. **Community Service** is activities that make a community a better place to live.

Six Components of Service

1. **Investigate:** Do a community walk to look for possible projects. Survey members of the community for existing needs.
2. **Prepare:** Encourage members to take an active role in planning the community service.
3. **Act:** Establish clear expectations for participation, and assign tasks based on strengths.
4. **Reflect:** Take time during and after the service project to reflect on what went well, what was learned and what could be done to improve.
5. **Celebrate:** Enable youth to demonstrate what they learned to others, and celebrate shared success. Share success with the community.
6. **Sustain:** Share leadership roles with parents, youth and community stakeholders. Sharing the responsibility helps ensure the project will continue even if club leadership changes.

Questions to Ask to Start

- What are our group's strengths?
- Is the project age appropriate?
- What goals are we hoping to accomplish with the project?
- How can I involve youth in planning the project?
- What safety concerns need to be addressed before beginning?
- What community groups can we partner with for support?

Community Service Ideas

- Organize a food drive
- Letters and cards to senior home
- Caroling for cans
- Park improvements
- Work a concession stand
- Recognize veterans
- Planting flowers and beautification projects
- Adopt-A-Highway
- Cookies for community partners
- Serve at a soup kitchen
- Operation Backpack

Community Partnerships

Community partners are a big part of the success of community service projects. Partners may assist with materials, funds or technical support (like working heavy equipment). Organizations who have supported 4-H in the past include FCS Financial, Wal-Mart, Sam's, grocery stores, United Way, Farm Bureau, Dept. of Conservation, Dept. of Agriculture, banks, local foundation organizations, churches, local service organizations, rural electric cooperatives and Thrivent Action Team Grants.

Keys For Success

Service projects need to have a clear ending point to keep youth engaged. If a project is long-term, build in periodic checkpoints to celebrate mini-successes to keep youth interest and involvement.

Give youth a voice: To strengthen commitment to the project, allow youth members to participate in planning and decision-making process.