

# SERVICE LEARNING: VOICES SPECIAL OPPTS

## Supporting School-Age Accreditation and Quality Programming

Although this project is not designed specifically for school-age youth, the five step service-learning model could be shared with older school-age children to develop smaller, less complex projects.

## Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development

Youth involved in 4-H know they are cared about and feel a sense of **BELONGING**; they exercise **INDEPENDENCE** by using decision-making and action to influence people and events; they develop a sense of **MASTERY** by learning skills needed in making positive career and life choices; and they experience **GENEROSITY** by helping others through community service. These elements support the Army Youth Development Components of Belonging, Success, Service and Independence.

## Community Service/ Service Learning Opportunities

Just look around, there are service-learning opportunities everywhere. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Make healthy snacks for a community race or design a promotional poster or t-shirt for the event.
- Paint a mural on a wall, community building or museum.
- Help with Habitat for Humanity.
- Build flower planters, furniture, picture frames or benches for community organizations.
- Create pottery bowls or other items and sell them for a good cause.
- Write the history of an elderly person and make it into a book. Share it with the historical society.
- Stencil drains to keep water clean, clear trails, build bird houses or other environmental projects.
- Adopt a classroom and work towards renovating it, providing new supplies so children will have a better learning environment.

## Ideas! Ideas! Ideas!

Field trips are unlimited as every new service project will lead youth on a new and exciting adventure in the community. The group might consider: homeless shelters, environmental areas, hospitals, and parks. Brainstorm with the project members where they might want to visit and provide service.

Shadow or visit non-profit organization workers, community leaders, news reporters, videographers and others that are listed in the various lessons to gain an understanding about an issue or need.



## Providing Quality Middle School and Teen Programming

Service-learning projects may be the “ideal” method for recruiting youth to the afterschool program. Many middle school and high school teens want to make a difference in their communities or help others. By being engaged in these types of projects they learn life skills that will be useful in the future. If they are empowered and find success with one project, they will want to continue to do more.

Many schools require youth community service hours for graduation from high school. This project helps youth meet this need and gives them a wonderful volunteer experience for future college scholarship or job applications.

## Opportunities for Youth Leadership and Development and Cross-age Teaching

Many of the activities in the *Service-Learning* project could be used for cross-aged projects where teens teach and involve younger children in their planning and implementation of a project.

## Summary

*Service-Learning: Voices Special Opps* helps middle school and high school youth plan their own service-learning projects. A four-stage process – preparation, action, reflection and celebration – helps guide youth through the project to a successful end.

# THE Army 4-H EXPRESS GUIDE TO

## SERVICE-LEARNING: VOICES SPECIAL OPPTS

More than canned food drives or trash pick-up, service-learning helps youth plan and carry out successful, meaningful projects. The possibilities are endless and the benefits are huge.





## Project Goals

*Service-Learning: Voices Special Opps* is designed to help youth learn the necessary steps to planning and carrying out a successful service-learning project. Topics include: choosing a project, researching and identifying a need, developing an action plan, performing the service, observation, reflection, journaling, and celebrate.

## Four Fun Activities

- 1 Taking a walk or drawing a map are ways to identify the valuable or good things about the neighborhood or community and also helps to identify the community needs or things that need to be improved. **Raise Your Voice, Walk About, pages 6-7**, provides a structured way of finding the community's assets.
- 2 Safety first! When planning a service-learning project, consider the risk factors, how to handle the unexpected and how to ensure that everyone stays safe. Using scenarios, youth will visualize and create strategies to reduce risk in their projects. **Raise Your Voice, Avoiding a Can of Worms, pages 18-19**, helps youth think about risk factors.
- 3 Reflection can be done in many ways. Some might like to reflect using journals, while others might use skits, mimes, draw cartoons, or sculpt to express their ideas. **Service-Learning Helper's Guide, Journal Jazz, pages 20-21**, explores new service-learning reflection ideas.
- 4 Celebrate! Celebrate! Celebrating the successes and individual strengths at the completion of the service-learning project is important. In **Service-Learning Helper's Guide, Ovation and Applause, pages 26-27**, each participant writes a quality that they admired about their team members while doing the project.

## Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning engages children and youth while they learn, share, and grow through their 4-H experiences. With an adult as the coach, the first step is "doing" or exploring. Next, youth share what they did and discuss the experience with their peers. After they've identified the skills and knowledge gained, help them determine how to apply these to other situations in their lives. All steps of the Experiential Learning process are included in service-learning although journaling in some way is strongly encouraged in the Reflection step.



## Project Activity Guides and Target Age Groups

**Agents of Change -Level 1** is designed for middle school youth. This guide helps youth choose a project, research the need, develop a plan and complete the project while recording progress and reflective thoughts through journaling. Finally, it stresses the importance of celebration and recognizing others for their contribution and support.

**Raise Your Voice-Level 2** is designed for high school youth and provides a variety of tools useful while planning and carrying out their own service-learning projects. They will learn how to organize a community forum, access needs using a survey, and how to work with the news media. Teens will strengthen their public speaking, storytelling and poetry skills which are useful in reflecting on the service experience.

**Service-Learning: Helper's Guide** is designed for leaders offering group service-learning activities like community mapping, identifying group roles and teaching journaling. It also has exciting activities such as creating a time capsule, designing a service-learning website as well as additional support materials for Levels 1 and 2.

**Journaling CD** has journaling prompts for all activities which helps youth reflect on their experience while leaving room for creative thought. **More Ideas** offers additional ways of engaging in reflection with others as well as other ideas for reflecting about the service-learning project.

## Related 4-H Projects

Community service projects suggested in many of the 4-H projects can be expanded into service-learning experiences by following the steps in the *Service-Learning Voices Special Opps* curriculum. *Citizenship Public Adventures 1 and 2* is an excellent project for incorporating service-learning.

## Integrating Technology

The online source for *Service-Learning: Voices Special Opps* is <http://www.n4hccs.org/servicelearning>.

The journaling questions and prompts provided after each lesson can be completed on the computer. Many of the activities in the manual require the use of computers to conduct research, design websites and search for community organizations.

Other possible websites include: [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org), <http://www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org>, [www.learnandserve.gov](http://www.learnandserve.gov)

## Character Connection

A person of good character is a good person, someone to look up to and admired, knows the difference from right and wrong and always tries to do what is right, sets a good example for everyone and makes the world a better place. All aspects of character should be a part of service-learning projects. Use the Six Pillars of Character<sup>sm</sup> - Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship – as a guide.

Additional character resources can be found at <http://www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org>

## Linking to the Army's Four Service Areas and Baseline Programming

**Sports, Fitness and Health Options**  
Physical activity like shoveling, walking or gardening is a "must" for some service projects and is a perfect fit for this Service Area. **Service-Learning Helper's Guide, Community Mapping, pages 16-17**, would be a great way to include fitness, health and service-learning.

**Arts, Recreation and Leisure Activities**  
Many of the reflection and celebration activities in the curriculum require skills in this Service Area. **Agents of Change, Medals and More, pages 28-29**, makes trophies from objects collected at the service site and **Raise Your Voice, Mirror Mirror, pages 22-23**, uses poetry in writing and journaling. Both of these activities as well as many others use arts and leisure activities to create celebrations.

**Life Skills, Citizenship, and Leadership Opportunities**  
*Service-Learning: Voices Special Opps* is the perfect project for this Service Area. Each lesson emphasizes one new life skill that not only helps youth for a particular service project but also helps develop the skill for a lifetime of use. **Agents of Change, Mission Possible, pages 10-11**, is an excellent decision-making activity.

**Academic Support, Mentoring, and Intervention Services**  
*Service-Learning: Voices Special Opps* offers so many ways to support this Service Area. Many of the lessons help develop academic skills such as reading, communications, and math. Depending upon the project selected they could also learn about local history or caring for the environment. Because so many skills are used in planning and completing a service-learning project it becomes a terrific addition to a résumé. **Raise Your Voice, Out in the World, pages 34-35**, helps youth identify skills they have learned that are beneficial to a potential employer.



## Life Skills

"Skills that help an individual to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life" are identified as Life Skills (Hendricks, 1996). *Service-Learning: Voices Special Opps* helps youth learn life skills like decision making, planning, organizing and goal setting with special emphasis in communications such as public speaking, news writing, and the importance of journaling or reflection. Youth will have the opportunity to practice a number of life skills as they plan and complete service-learning experiences.