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.

**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.
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. 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! Celebrating the successes and individual strengths at the completion of the service-learning project is important. In Service-Learning Helper’s Guide, Ovations 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 grow through their 4-H experiences. With an adult as the coach, Experiential Learning engages children and youth while they learn, share, reflect, journaling, and celebrate.

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. They will also learn how to design a service-learning project, 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.

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 www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org www.learnandserve.gov

Character Connection
A person of good character is 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 – Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship – as a guide.

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

Life Skills, Citizenship, and Leadership Opportunities
Service-Learning: Voices Special Opps offers 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.

“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.