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Leadership Development and Service-Learning

By John Hoang Sarvey, Executive Director of City Year San Jose/Silicon Valley and Abby Benedetto, Service Manager for the Young Heroes and City Heroes Programs

We all know that community service is more thoughtful, transformative, and effective when there is a full understanding of the context and there are structured opportunities to draw out lessons from the experience. Whether linked formally to an academic course or incorporated as part of a program’s training and reflection, service-learning greatly improves the quality of impact on the service and the participants. At City Year San Jose/Silicon Valley, we are beginning to identify elements of service-learning that can sig-



Members of Young Heroes and City Year finish morning program with a “Spirit Break”

nificantly advance participants’ leadership skills development.

Our approach to service-learning includes an emphasis on learning outcomes specifically geared toward developing participants as leaders capable of addressing community and social issues by engaging others in service. Inherent in these outcomes are certain skills such as critical analysis, problem-solving, communications, managing diversity, building team and community, service project development, and project manage-

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Theme: Listening to the Voice of Youth/Youth as Leaders—Editor’s Box

The definition of leadership, according to James Kouzes and Barry Posner, is “the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.” Youth leadership, therefore, can be defined as young people making decisions and assuming responsibility in the design, implementation, and evaluation of activities in their schools and communities. (*With thanks to Joy Des Marais, NYLC*)

America’s Promise is dedicated to fulfilling five promises for young people, thereby building and strengthening the character and competence of our youth. One of these five promises is to provide young people with an opportunity to give back to their communities through service. An important way of fulfilling this promise is empowering youth to take leadership roles in their organization, community, and schools, thus gaining skills in such areas

as decision-making, management, and problem solving. This not only enhances self-esteem but also instills a sense of service that can carry through a lifetime.

This issue of *The Resource Connection* explores how some national service programs are guiding youth into leadership roles. There are tips and strategies that your program might consider to increase youth involvement in program development, trainings, board representation, and other leadership development strategies.

There is also a list of websites with youth leadership as a focus, publications available through the NSRC lending library on youth voice, and a summary of the recommendations resulting from the round table sessions on youth philanthropy. ■

Leadership Development

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ment. While some service-learning programs rely on individual service placements, our approach by its very nature must involve group-based service. In fact, our programs tend to incorporate substantial amounts of teamwork and community building.

Most full-time corps-based AmeriCorps programs exemplify this concept. At City Year San Jose/Silicon Valley, we are also applying this concept to two programs through which our AmeriCorps members engage middle and high school students.

Young Heroes

Young Heroes, a structured youth service corps for middle school students, was first started six years ago in Boston when a middle school student asked why she couldn't be in City Year. Because the AmeriCorps members couldn't think of a satisfactory answer, they decided to create a City Year-like program for middle school students.

Today Young Heroes' programs engage over 1,000 middle school students in ten cities throughout the nation. The middle school students must submit a written application and be interviewed. Once accepted, they commit to serving almost every Saturday for five months. They are placed on diverse teams of 10 to 12 led by team leaders, wear uniforms, participate in high energy calisthenics, go through leadership and service workshops, and engage in transformative service projects. The teams are named after local, living heroes who currently serve the community. The Young Heroes have the opportunity to meet these heroes, to hear from them, and sometimes perform service with them.

City Heroes

Drawing upon the model and success of Young Heroes, a few City Year programs have started programs to engage high school students. This year at City Year San Jose/Silicon Valley we launched a "City Heroes" program with over 50 high school students. Because the Saturday

model doesn't work as well for high school students, we have a modified schedule that includes service projects, leadership training conferences, and retreats. The program, which runs from January to June, engages about 50 high school students two times a month in a variety of settings.

City Heroes is based on the belief that high school students have the passion and the drive not only to serve but to become leaders in inspiring their peers to serve. The high school students

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Young Heroes during a neighborhood clean-up on MLK Day

Core Elements of City Year's Approach to Service-Leadership Development

- ◆ Participants not only perform community service, but they develop leadership skills in order to engage others in service.
- ◆ Learning outcomes are geared toward becoming a better service-leader and include critical analysis, problem-solving, communications, managing diversity, building team and community, service project development, and project management.
- ◆ The program is time-intensive, often over 100 hours over a very specific period of time with a clear start and finish.
- ◆ It is very clear whether or not a participant is in the program. There is no floating in and out. Individuals need to apply and get accepted. Once in the program, they identify themselves as being part of the program: "I am a Young Hero."
- ◆ The program is very structured and involves substantial amounts of group process, teamwork, and community building. Working in groups is a powerful vehicle for transformation.



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Leadership Development

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are placed on diverse teams of 8 to 10 led by team leaders with whom they participate in monthly activities as well as organize their own specific service project, tackling a social issue they have identified as important. Using a curriculum that includes leadership development, diversity training, and transformative service, the City Heroes complete over 100 hours of service. This helps them become equipped with the tools and confidence to effectively assess the needs of a community and create programs to work towards solving those needs.

Striving for the Ripple Effect

One of the advantages of programs with an intentional emphasis on leadership development is that the impact and the service doesn't just end

with the participants. By its very nature the program is designed to "ripple out" as the participants engage even more people, particularly their peers, in service. Through this approach, five AmeriCorps members could engage 100 high school students who then lead 1,000 more high school students—the ultimate volunteer multiplier effect.

When all of these elements—service, leadership, diversity, community building—are combined into a comprehensive and structured program, it makes for a much deeper, more meaningful and transformative experience.

For more information on City Year San Jose/Silicon Valley and its programs, call John Hoang Sarvey at 408-294-2290,
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President's Student Service Challenge

The President's Student Service Challenge is an opportunity for schools, colleges, and community organizations to recognize outstanding service of young people who volunteer every day to improve their communities, and to encourage more young people to serve.

There are two programs that make up the President's Student Service Challenge:

President's Student Service Awards

Youth ages 5 to 25 may receive an award for 100 hours of service to their community

President's Student Service Scholarships

One exemplary junior or senior in each high school may receive a \$1,000 scholarship for outstanding service

Here's how to find out more:

President's Student Service Awards

P.O. Box 189
Wilmington, DE 19899-0189
phone: 302-622-9107
fax: 302-622-9106
e-mail: pssainfo@dca.net
website: www.student-service-awards.org



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