

A CLUB LEADER'S GUIDE TO 4-H SERVICE



Service-Learning is just what the name implies, a service activity that puts equal emphasis on the learning of youth as it does the action of service. Research and reflection are integral to learning through service. Service-learning actively engages youth in higher level critical thinking skills and a systems- based approach to understanding community problems.

Service-Learning projects should meet a community need. Stress the common sense approach in this idea- *we should only help where help is needed*. Assist your members in determining or brainstorming what needs exist in their club, school, neighborhood, farm or other community.

Service Learning should actively engage youth in considering and answering the questions:

WHAT? What is the problem or need in my community? What factors are causing that need to exist in the first place?

SO WHAT? Why is this a real need or problem? Who or what is affected as a result of the problem and what is the impact on the larger community?

NOW WHAT? What can we do to address the problem in the short term through a service project, and how might we seek to relieve the root causes of the problem in the long term through advocacy or other means? How can we share our knowledge and experiences with others?

Service learning reveals the **“WHO”** that is the object of your service. Youth should work as partners with the community they are serving and learn about their needs and the issues which they face.

Transformative service is done “with” not “for”- try to encourage youth to see both what they provide through service as well as what they receive, and to view the object of their service (such as an elderly community) as working partners, not just passive receptors of service efforts.

Reflection in Service –Learning occurs before, during and after the event. Reflection often gets dropped due to time constraints, but it is the best way to help youth process their experience and where much learning takes place. Some ideas for reflection include:

BEFORE: Use your senses to imagine your project. What will the sounds and smells be? What do they imagine the people, animals or environment to look or act like? Talk, draw pictures etc.

DURING: Were the predictions correct? Take a moment to ask the kids to just notice the surroundings as well as their own thoughts and feelings.

AFTER: Compare the prediction with the observation. What can we learn through the differences? Think about questions that can help youth process their feelings and experiences. Use discussion, drawing, writing etc.

For a guide to planning community service events, see the page “10 Steps to Community Service”