

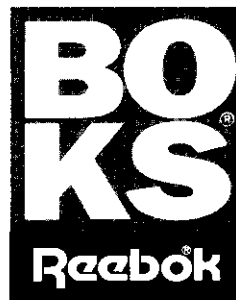


P R O J E C T

A M E R I C A

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to Make a
Difference**



*Boks is proud to be Project America's partner in bringing you this
Action Guide to Community Service, a resource for making it
fun and easy for anyone to improve their community.*

**PROJECT AMERICA
ACTION GUIDE
TO
COMMUNITY SERVICE**

For Norman Balchunas, Conrad Eberstein, and our parents...



New York Cares
Photo by Richard Law '93

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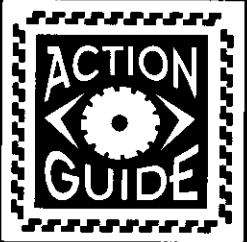
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Written by Heidi Reinberg and Cheryl White

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"There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction."

— John F. Kennedy



Our country has seen its share of problems.

But no matter the situation, no matter the obstacle, Americans have always responded to a crisis with a "can-do" attitude. There was nothing — not the Great Depression, not World War II — that the people of this country thought they could not overcome. Often, that belief alone propelled them to success.

But today it seems that we are bombarded with messages about how the United States is an over-the-hill country, how we can no longer solve the problems that

face our nation. How crime is tearing apart our inner cities. How race relations are getting worse every day. How we are destroying our environment. How there are few positive role models for youth and few jobs for people who want them.

A note from the staff

There's no denying that these problems are huge. Perhaps they cannot be solved in a day, or in a year, or maybe not even in our lifetime. But we have to start somewhere.

Project America was formed a few years ago by young people in a small town on the East Coast. Our goal: To break through apathy and inspire people to take action to improve their communities. At the heart of our organization is a belief in the power of the individual to make a difference. If we all get out into the streets, if we all pitch in by lending our skills to a school, helping the elderly, making food available to the hungry — we can rebuild our sense of community. We can't sit back and let government, big business, and nonprofits take care of everything. America belongs to all of us.

This Action Guide to Community Service is the beginning of our efforts. It is geared towards everyone: from first-time volunteers to hard-core community activists, from students to senior citizens, from inner-city residents to inhabitants of small rural towns.

In the following pages, you will find many ideas for community improvement projects. We want this book to serve as a starting point, an introduction to a lifetime of service. If you're already a committed volunteer — and there are thousands out there — share what you know with the other people on your project. They — and the community — will benefit from your experience.

From all of us here at Project America, thanks for your efforts.

Overview

This Action Guide to Community Service covers the basics of how to conduct a community service project. The first two sections deal with building a team and developing a service project. The third section — the core of this book — contains ideas for service projects. The final sections cover such nuts and bolts topics as managing volunteers; forming committees; budgeting and fundraising; publicizing a project; and legal issues. At the end of the book, you'll find general volunteer and safety guidelines.

Read this guide, learn from it, share it with others — and use it as a springboard for serving your community.

It's time to get to it.

Why Teamwork?

Project America's Action Guide to Community Service takes a team approach to community service. Although we encourage "solo" volunteer efforts as well, we believe that team service is an especially powerful tool for affecting change. Why?

Teams Get Big Results.

Volunteers working in groups can have a bigger and more immediate impact than one person working alone. A team of fifteen teens, for example, can paint an

entire community center in a day, while it would probably take one person ten weeks to finish the same project.

Teams Build Unity. By uniting people from all segments of society, team service fosters a spirit of community, a feeling of "I'm part of something bigger than myself." And it demonstrates that people, pulling together, can make change happen.

Teams Promote Equality. Team service is an equal-opportunity activity, crossing age, race, ethnic, social, religious, and economic lines. It provides a level playing field, where every player is equal because everyone has something to contribute.

Who Can be Part of a Team?

A team can be two people or it can be 100. It can include your brother, your neighbor, your friends, your teacher, your co-workers, and your boss. No matter who else is involved, your team should also include people who live in the community in which you'll be working, especially those who will directly benefit from your project. After all, they know their needs best.

Ideally, the more people you bring to the table, the greater the impact you'll have — not only on the day of your project, but also after the service has been completed.

Who Does What?

A team is usually made up of team volunteers and a project leader. Although specific responsibilities will vary from team to team, here are some general "job descriptions":

Team volunteers: Volunteers are the backbone of the team, the people who make a project happen. Their responsibilities can range from fundraising, to locating a place to hold an event, to painting a house for a senior citizen. More than just "free labor," volunteers contribute invaluable talents, skills, ideas, and experiences to a project.

Project leader: A project leader serves as the key coordinator for a team's project before, during, and after the day of the event. He or she plans and organizes the group's activities with the help of volunteers and possibly with a local nonprofit organization. The project leader also monitors the project from beginning to end.

Other Players

Many service projects also involve other project partners. One such partner may be a community-based organization (CBO), otherwise known as a nonprofit. CBOs can be homeless shelters, hunger relief organizations, youth centers, advocacy and outreach groups, hospitals, and schools, among other types of organizations. There are thousands of nonprofits across America that are on the front lines of change. Many of them could use your help.

If your team doesn't have time to create your own service project, you should think about volunteering for one of the many ongoing service programs organized by nonprofits; for example, schools often administer Saturday programs for neighborhood children. Otherwise, you can hook up with a nonprofit to get a new project off the ground. If you do so, keep in mind that it may take a few brainstorming sessions to come up with a project that works for both groups. Even if your team doesn't form a partnership with a CBO, these organizations can provide valuable guidance and support.

Local businesses can also be project partners. More and more companies are recognizing the value of community service, and many would be more than happy to donate lunch, supplies, manpower, and/or funds for your service project. If you do approach a business in your area, be flexible. Although a bank may be tapped out for monetary contributions for the year, it may be willing to coordinate a company-wide drive to collect pencils, books, and paper for your educational day camp for homeless kids.

ALL TOGETHER, NOW: BUILDING A TEAM



New York Cares
Photo by Richard Law '93

**"It takes
an entire
village
to raise
a child."**

— African proverb

SO YOU WANT TO SERVE: DEVELOPING A PROJECT

and personal characteristics, all of which enhance the project.

#3: Know the mission of your project.

Be clear about what you want to accomplish before you start planning project details. If you don't have a set goal in mind — and if you don't stay focused on that goal — you and your volunteers will only be spinning your wheels.

You've decided you want to do a community service activity. The question is, what kind of activity?

Your team might already have a certain project in mind; or, you might already know that you want to work with a certain group of people, such as senior citizens. But if you're starting with a blank slate, there are several places to turn for ideas on how you can best serve your community. Resources include the mayor's office, your city's human services administration, your local volunteer center, area churches and synagogues, and, as mentioned earlier, community nonprofits. To get you thinking, we've included several project ideas in this book that you can tailor to your community.

When it comes to planning projects, there are no hard and fast rules. Be creative. Use your judgment. And remember: There are no small projects. A service activity doesn't have to be elaborate to be effective. Your team can do as much good by taking children living in a homeless shelter to a local park as you can by putting on a carnival for them.

Here are some other things to keep in mind:

#1: Be inclusive. Think along the lines of working with people rather than for people. If you want to clean up a youth center, get the local teens who use it involved. If you want to develop a project for nursing home residents, get their input. The best projects are those that draw upon the insights and experiences of community residents.

#2: Recognize what each person has to offer. When it comes to service, no one is better or more important than anyone else. Every person brings to the table special skills

#4: Be Hands-On. Try to develop a project that puts you in the middle of the community and that gives you something concrete to show for at the end of the project. It's best to steer clear of projects that involve a lot of paper-pushing or data entry; although important, these types of volunteer activities are usually undertaken by individual volunteers in an office.

#5: Meet Real Needs. Your group may be asked to do an activity that, although "nice," doesn't meet the community's needs or group's mission. Take direction from the community. Do not "impose service" — create it in partnership with the community. Planting daffodils might be a lovely thing to do, but is it what the community wants? Is it something that volunteers will learn from?

When it comes to
planning projects,
there are no hard
and fast rules.

Be creative.

Use your judgment.

And remember:

There are no
small projects.



International Odd Fellow
& Rebekah

VIQS (VERY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS)

As you plan your project, ask yourself the following questions:

What impact do you want your project to have?

- ❑ Will the project meet real needs? Will the effects of your project last, or will it need to be conducted on an ongoing basis for its impact to be felt?
- ❑ Will the volunteers learn something from their experience? Will they want to continue to volunteer after the project is finished? If you're working with a nonprofit, will volunteers be motivated to keep up their volunteer work for that organization?

Is your project right for your team?

- ❑ Does the project "fit" with the ages and the abilities of people in your group? Are team members up for the job, physically and emotionally?
- ❑ Is any training necessary for the volunteers, either before or during your project? Can you provide that training? Can you recruit volunteers with the additional skills your group needs?
- ❑ Is your group big enough to accomplish the project? Is it too big? Can you manage a group of its size? Is there something for everyone to do during the entire length of the project — or do you need to split the team into two or more service activities?

How much, if anything, will the project cost?

- ❑ Have you thought about such costs as admissions, supplies, meals, transportation? Have you considered how much, if anything, each volunteer will have to contribute from his or her own pocket?
- ❑ Can your group ask local businesses to help out by donating food, supplies, equipment, office space, and/or manpower?
- ❑ If you're working with a nonprofit, can it help with the project cost?

Have you covered all safety bases?

- ❑ Is there enough parking for volunteers in a well-lit area?
- ❑ Can you meet at a central location and carpool?
- ❑ Is there public transportation available to and from the site?
- ❑ If you're working with any tools, are they in good working order? Do you know how to use them? Can you get items such as safety goggles and work gloves for each volunteer? Will you be able to recruit knowledgeable supervisors? Can you provide adequate training for volunteers?
- ❑ Do your team members or any other people you'll be working with have special medical needs that might compromise their safety?
- ❑ Have you thought about any accidents that might happen, and how to deal with them?



Community Impact

PROJECT IDEAS



The following project ideas will give you a sense of all the different kinds of volunteer needs that exist in communities across America. They are designed to get you thinking — to give you a jump start on planning a service project.

For easy reference, we've divided project ideas into the following sections:

- ☐ Youth
- ☐ Seniors
- ☐ People with disabilities
- ☐ Hunger and homelessness
- ☐ Drives
- ☐ The Environment
- ☐ Miscellaneous

Many of the projects in this book are modeled after volunteer activities that have already proved to be successful. Some are specifically designed as one-day projects; others are geared for the long term. All of them can be adapted to meet the specific needs of your community. Feel free to use any of these ideas. But if you want to develop your own project, by all means do it.



ADOPT-A-SCHOOL.

Teacher shortages. Lack of funds. Decaying facilities. These are only some of the problems facing the nation's schools today. We can sit back and let others deal with these problems. Or, we can help do something about them.

Across America, hundreds of volunteers have already taken matters into their own hands by getting out into their communities and "adopting" a local school.

Adopt-a-School activities range from helping students with their math homework, to coaching kids in a sport, to landscaping an entire elementary school. Some projects last for a day, others for the whole year. Although programs vary from school to school, they all share a common mission: to make kids feel good about themselves.

Most volunteers agree on one key thing: once they get involved, they're hooked. Take the case of students at Washington University in St. Louis. When several children at their adopted school were kidnapped and murdered, the volunteers organized an after-school escort service to help keep other kids safe.

Jennifer Wilber runs the two-year-old Adopt-a-School project for the National Interfraternity Council (NIC). Through this program, college students from around the country work with local elementary-school students. Typically, volunteers meet with children for one-on-one tutoring or work with kids in after-school computer or sports programs. "It makes the kids know they matter when they see the same volunteer coming each week just to see them," said Wilber. In addition to boosting kids' self-esteem, the program aims to improve school attendance and performance.

Though most volunteers start out working with kids once a week, many end up giving even more of their time. Others bridge out into other activities, such as fixing up the school or meeting other neighborhood needs.

One Lehigh University student was so "into" the program that he changed his major from

engineering to elementary education after working with "adopted" students. And a George Mason University student did such impressive work with her adopted school that she was hired as a substitute teacher.

Both schools and volunteers have been so positive about Adopt-a-School that the number of campuses involved in the program more than doubled in 1994. In fact, Wilber has been deluged with requests from graduate volunteers to start an alumni Adopt-a-School program. The NIC Adopt-a-School program will be on 500 college campuses by 1998.

You don't have to be a college student to adopt a school. Just make sure that you work with school principals and/or other administrators to come up with activities that meet that school's specific needs.

✓SPEAK YOUR MIND. Twenty-three-year-old Anna Maria Nieves was furious when she nearly lost her job for speaking out at a community meeting. So she started her own organization, Urban X, to provide a forum for youth to get their voices heard in New York City.

Through Urban X's "speakouts," teens have a chance to make their feelings known to a panel of city leaders. At one speakout focusing on police-youth relations, a panel composed of the police commissioner, police department youth-outreach representatives, and members of the juvenile justice system responded to comments and questions from more than 1,200 young New Yorkers.

In order for a speakout to be successful, says Nieves, it should be organized around a subject that will get participants "angry" — and it must be focused. For instance, a speakout on the subject of "drugs" won't work, while an event on the topic of "budget cuts in city youth programs" will likely generate a lot of support.

Nieves usually builds her speakouts into a day-long series of events. For one speakout, the agenda looked like this:

- Keynote speaker (a youth)
- Entertainment from various grass-roots youth groups



Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity

- Workshops
- Lunch
- Caucus (where participants developed an action plan in response to a designated issue)
- Speakout
- Unity jam party

Other Urban X projects include a tip sheet called "The Unspoken Truth" about teen rights, and a newsletter, "Unspoken Words," whose contributors include young people in jail and other youth at risk.

Nieves' tactics are making youth a force to be reckoned with in New York City. "I always preach one thing: that young people have always been the catalyst for social change. We shouldn't mess with a good thing. We've got to let the generation in power know that we're out here."

✓**YOUTH SUMMIT.** Today's youth are pretty much capable of doing anything they set their minds to. Just ask Ed Cruz, twenty-three-year-old project coordinator for the East Bay Asian Youth Center in Oakland, CA. Cruz worked with an organizing committee of 18 — not one of whom was over the age of 17 — to bring together more than 350 Asian and other young people for a youth summit.

From panelists to facilitators, the entire conference was youth led, although Cruz said EBAYC did bring in "opposing opinions so that we could get other perspectives." Even security for the event was staffed by youth in T-shirts, instead of the usual uniformed cops.

According to Cruz, summits are a great way to bring communities together "because you have to change the thinking, and the mentality" behind today's social problems. He emphasizes that it's imperative to keep the momentum going after the conference. After last year's event, participants took on a number of community service projects, like cleaning vacant lots, educating their peers, and building awareness in the community about the challenges youth face.

Last year's conference was built around three workshops:

- He Said/She Said, about domestic violence.

- Book Knowledge, Street Knowledge: What Are We Learning about the educational system and how to change it.
- Pipes, Pistols, and Police, about street violence and youth-police relations

Although the EBAYC summit was a lot of hard work, Cruz thinks youth must come together often to talk about their views. "Youth today might not know all of the answers, but they know some of the important ones. They are the ones that know what they're going through. There's always gonna be problems like street violence unless youth do something. The solutions might not be immediate — but they might be lasting."

✓**CENTER STAGE.** Hand out a script, dim the lights, and even the quietest youth may prove to be the next Great American Actor.

Given the out-of-the-ballpark costs of theater tickets today, many people — particularly the young — have limited access to one of the greatest of all art forms.

Your team can provide that access by working with a group of young people to put on their own dramatic production.

When it comes to drama, every person — from the class clown to the kid who never raises his hand — has something to give, whether it be on stage or behind the scenes. They may never make it to Broadway, but no matter; the point is to provide a positive means for young people to express themselves, an outlet for their creative energy.

Consider LA Works' Drama Life program. Through this initiative, volunteers from Los Angeles' entertainment industry work with inner-city youth — aged 7 to 17 — to put on a play in a real theater. With the help of the pros, the young people have a say in all aspects of the production, including set and costume design, directing, and public relations.

Drama Life has been so successful in Los Angeles that LA Works plans to expand the program to other sites (such as a probation camp) and to include other forms of artistic expression like rap music and poetry.



Every year 1 million
girls under age 20
become pregnant.
42% abort. 40,000
teenagers drop out
of school every
year because of
pregnancy.

(CQ Researcher 7/5/91)

You don't have to live in Hollywood to develop a theater project. As Frances Andrews, who runs the Drama Life program, pointed out, every community has experienced performers, whether they are theater professionals in New York City or community-theater volunteers in Boise. The important thing, said Andrews, is to "allow the kids to be part of the planning. You may arrive with an outline, but don't color it in till you have the kids' input."



New York Cares
Photo by Richard Law '93

Don't feel as though you have to put on "Hamlet." You can tailor the type of production you do to the interests and ability level of the age group you're working with.

✓**HOSPITAL HELP.** If you think being sick in bed is a drag, then imagine what it's like to be six years old and confined to a hospital for days on end. It's not only totally boring — it's also lonesome.

Many of the nation's hospitals have a huge need for volunteers to visit with patients in their children's wards. As Washington, D.C. volunteer Laura Canfield pointed out, these children need play time "just like any other kids, except they're especially vulnerable."

Canfield leads a team of volunteers in the pediatrics ward at Howard University Hospital. Patients involved in Howard's Child Life program range in age from newborn to 17, and have been hospitalized for everything from a broken leg to AIDS.

The hospital has a playroom stocked with books, games, and stuffed animals. Volunteers on the team often rotate assignments: Canfield, for example, may do art projects with a group of teens; read a bedtime story to a bedridden eight-year-old; and finish off her evening by visiting an abandoned infant. Most kids "are thrilled that you've come to play with them. You can see on their faces a genuine happiness, and that means a lot to me," she said.

Some things for you to think about:

- Hospitals located in low-income, urban areas have the greatest need for volunteers.

- Many hospitals require first-time volunteers to take a few medical tests and an orientation before they begin volunteering. If a hospital does not offer an orientation on issues like how to answer children's questions about illness or death, you should enlist the aid of someone experienced in this area.
- If your team can't spend time playing with children at a hospital, think about organizing a drive for playroom supplies. See the section on "Drives" (page 22) for more information.
- Consider adding a clown or local sports personality to your team. While he or she entertains a group of kids, team members can play with patients who can't get to the playroom. While you lead a group of kids in a group activity, your guest of honor can meet with patients one-on-one.
- If the ward's dietary restrictions permit, bring along a treat donated by a local merchant. Some volunteer teams have birthday parties on the ward floor for all the kids with birthdays that month.
- Ask a local toy store or another merchant to donate an item for patients to take home with them.

✓**HOOPSTERS.** When Rolette Thomas, Jr., set about designing an after-school program for 40 children at Atlanta's College Park Elementary, he wanted to combine academics and athletics to make learning more fun. The result: five-quarter basketball.

Three days a week, Thomas and other volunteers meet with their two teams of fourth- and fifth-graders for a five-quarter competition. After running math drills with the kids, the contest begins. The first "quarter" of the game consists of "game-style math maneuvers" — mathematical contests waged on the blackboard. At the end of the match, each team's individual scores are combined for a team average. The two teams then square off for four quarters of basketball, and both scores — academic and athletic — are added to determine the day's winning team.

"We knew the kids weren't dumb; they just weren't motivated," said Thomas. "They really

wanted to study. When they saw that their academic skills could cost them the game, they'd come running up to us to ask, 'Show me how to do this; show me how to do that.'" A major benefit of the five-quarter basketball program is that it provides a "competitive edge on both ends," says Thomas. In other words, it gives students who excel in either the classroom or on the court a chance to contribute to their team.

Five-quarter basketball has been a winner with College Park students, who have improved both their math skills and their attendance records. In fact, it has been such a hit — among students of both sexes — that it is going to become the cornerstone for a Corporation for National Service effort at the school.

Note that this project can be adapted to a different sport (soccer, baseball, etc.). Just make sure to choose something that will have the greatest appeal to the greatest number of students.

✓JOB FAIR. All kids need to know that their futures hold unlimited possibilities. To drive this message home, Nicole Kelly, of Greenville, SC designed the "When I Grow Up" series, which introduces kids to nontraditional careers via guest speakers and field trips.

Speakers are chosen for their passion about their careers; Kelly believes that passion will trickle down to her kids. She looks for people in "compelling, visual jobs who love what they do," a theme which is repeated constantly throughout the series.

Each speaker makes a one-hour presentation, then leads the children in a workshop or on a field trip centered around his or her career. These field trips "bring home in a more creative way what it really feels like to be a sculptor or a policeman," says Kelly. The first "When I Grow Up" speaker was a decoy maker; after his presentation, the kids were given modeling clay and plastic knives to construct their own creations. Future guests include a disc jockey, a jewelry maker, a restaurateur, and an emergency medical services technician.

One key aspect of the program is that the kids are exposed "to a wide variety of career options, with a wide variety of educational

requirements," says Kelly. "For some of these careers, kids will need to go to college, but for others, they may need only a high school or trade school degree."

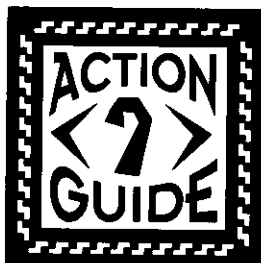
Response from speakers — many of whom were flattered to be asked to share their lives with young people — has been overwhelming. "The most important thing," says Kelly, "is that we're working together to give these kids something to dream about — and that's not something many of these kids have particularly had."

If your team wants to do a one-day event, you can sponsor a "When I Grow Up Job Fair." Bring together several people in unusual careers to talk to kids, and have them bring along "props." Make sure to leave plenty of time for questions and answers.

And another thing... More tips for projects for youth

- Describe the project before it starts. Be firm about any rules — and enforce them. Young people respond well to an organized, structured project with a confident project leader.
- Know the "house rules" of the facility you're visiting.
- Forbid the use of alcohol and other illegal substances.
- If you're a youth leading a youth event, solicit the advice and support of adults you respect in your community.
- Give constant encouragement and positive feedback.
- If you're working with children, match each volunteer with one or two kids for the duration of the project. Be sure to make a list of volunteer/child matches for periodic roll calls. The project leader should be responsible for everyone, and thus should not be paired with a child.
- Do not let kids out of your sight at any time — even to go to the bathroom.
- Unless it is sanctioned as part of the project, don't buy any "gifts" or extras for project participants.

"I always preach one thing: that young people have always been the catalyst for social change. We shouldn't mess with a good thing. We've got to let the generation in power know that we're out here."



ESCORT, ANYONE?

Getting even the simplest tasks done — like going to the bank, the grocery store, or even to a doctor's appointment — can be hard for elderly people who can't get around like they used to or who are afraid to venture out on their own.

You can help local senior citizens get through their to-do lists by serving as "errand escorts" for a day, or by performing the errands yourself. Make sure to spend some time just talking to the person to whom you are assigned. Your interest and companionship will be much appreciated.

Some tips:

- Don't try to do too much. Some seniors may get tired easily, and may only want to get a few things accomplished.
- Try to include a visit to the local senior center as part of your rounds; or, hook up with other volunteers on your team and the seniors they're working with for an end-of-day get-together.
- If many of your seniors seem to be shopping in the same stores, or banking at the same bank, have those facilities provide you with materials that enable the seniors to shop or bank from home. For example, many grocery stores deliver, while most banks offer banking-by-mail services.
- Ask your local police department to give you senior safety tips and to advise you on "safe routes" for the elderly. The police might even be able to work with you to mark and register seniors' valuables.

✓**SAFETY EXPO.** Elderly people are often targets of crime and violence because they are perceived as being especially vulnerable and "helpless".

Your team can empower local seniors by providing them with information about the precautions they should take to help keep themselves safe. You can model your program after a successful safety education campaign sponsored by TV station Channel 11

In Atlanta. In 1986, after four elderly women were murdered in Atlanta, Channel 11 distributed 250 information packets with safety protection tips, local services for elderly people, and "Senior Phone Line" cards with emergency numbers for police, hospital, crime line, rape center, and mental health services in large type.

Channel 11's campaign also included a Senior Safety Fair, attended by 200 senior citizens. The station provided buses to transport seniors to the fair. Co-sponsor Home Depot donated smoke detectors, dead-bolt locks, window pins, and padlocks for seniors who needed them. Fifteen organizations set up booths at the fair. The Red Cross provided photo ID cards for senior citizens without driver's licenses. The Atlanta Police Department handed out senior safety materials and gave demonstrations on safety precautions. The Fire Bureau gave a presentation on fire prevention, and the West End Medical Center, Emory University Hospital, and Mack's Fitness Center demonstrated physical fitness techniques for the elderly.

If your team conducts a safety education project, make sure that you give people the facts without giving them the impression that there is a criminal lurking around every corner. You want to make people feel safer, not more fearful.

✓**TO YOUR HEALTH.** Simple health screenings can help older people avoid serious illnesses down the line; yet, many seniors fail to get such tests because they lack access to basic medical services.

Take a page from the book of WSMV-TV in Nashville, and organize a senior health expo to bring health services directly to elders in your community. At WSMV's fair, two thousand senior citizens were tested for glaucoma, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Because the expo took place during a heat wave, the station also ran a drive to collect electric fans, and gathered 360 of them.

If you choose to do your own health fair, get local medical students or hospital staff on board. In addition to performing screenings, they can let seniors know about the health-care services available to them.

Youth Volunteer Corps of America
Photo by Michael Regnier



As part of your event, you may want to include preventive dental services, such as free cleanings; or, you could host an entire "dental fair" instead.

With any expo type of project, you'll need a large number of volunteers to "meet and greet," show people around, direct traffic, and answer questions.

Note: If you add a drive component to your fair, make sure you've planned for adequate storage facilities, both at the event and after you've collected your items. And don't forget to plan for delivery of the donated items.

✓**SENIOR OLYMPICS.** Anyone who has an image of all elderly people as frail need look no further than Johnny Kelly of Boston, a past winner of the Boston Marathon. Though he is over 80 years old, he still runs an impressive 10 miles a day.

Obviously, Kelly is an exceptional athlete. Nonetheless, there are still thousands of active, vital, older Americans who have energy to burn. Your team can provide an outlet for this vitality by organizing a "Senior Olympics."

The Fort Wayne, IN Department of Parks and Recreation has been producing its Senior Games for 16 years. The program has become so popular that each Olympics now lasts for four days. Last year, Senior Olympians from across the country competed in different age categories (55-59; 60-64; 65-69; 70-74; and 75+) in such events as golf, tennis, shuffleboard, darts, pool, swimming, and croquet.

According to Recreation Supervisor Susie LeBlanc, Senior Olympics build a "sense of camaraderie and team spirit." Her volunteers, most of whom are 40-years-old and up, help shape and coordinate the Games. For first-time organizers, LeBlanc suggests starting small, with five or six strong events like track and field, swimming, cycling, bowling, shuffleboard, golf, and tennis. Make sure to include some activities that don't require athletic ability. One of the most popular events at Fort Wayne's games, for example, is the card game euchre.

This project can be conducted in conjunction with several partners. For example, you can:

- Contact schools, recreation centers, or health clubs for use of their facilities for your Games.
- Approach local sporting goods stores for donations of equipment and/or discount coupons.
- Ask grocery stores to supply water, fresh fruit, and other quick energy snacks.

For more information about Senior Games, notify your state council on aging.

✓**SHOWTIME.** Everyone likes to sit back, relax, and be entertained, and seniors living in a retirement home — especially those who get few visitors — are no exception.

Tap the talents of members of your team and put on a show for local seniors. Don't worry about costumes or production values; creativity is what counts.

The format of your show will depend upon the amount of time your volunteers can give. For example, volunteers can perform several acts together or they can perform separately. Try to include some selections that have significance for your audience. Don't be surprised, however, if the seniors really get into current forms of artistic expression, like rap music. If your team has more planning and preparation time, have each volunteer team up with a senior to produce a selection of their choice.

Another option: take your school's drama department, band, or chorus on the road. Or, have your community theater or singing group put on a special production for nursing home residents. Whatever kind of show you decide to do, don't forget to have extra volunteers in the audience to engage seniors who need some extra attention.

✓**BRUSH UP.** All it takes is a couple of coats of paint and a few hours to completely transform a house with a fading, peeling exterior. Yet many older people are no longer up to the job or can't afford to hire someone to do it.

?

FACTOID
Did You Know

The US Census

Bureau estimates that

14.5% of the

US population

lives in poverty.

(National Review 11/29/93)

Make sure to spend some time just talking to the person to whom you are assigned. Your interest and companionship will be much appreciated.

In one program in Minneapolis, more than 8,000 volunteers turn out each year to paint the homes of the elderly or disabled in a seven county area. Over the last four years, the group has painted more than 1,000 houses. Each home is usually prepped in advance, and a team of 30 to 40 volunteers works from 8 a.m. until noon to finish the painting job.

You can check with paint stores, hardware stores, building-supply superstores, or large discount stores for donations of paint and any other supplies you might need. Many of these stores have fairly extensive employee service programs and can offer expertise in addition to supplies. Also, local unions may be willing to supply supervisors or volunteers.



International Odd Fellow & Rebekah

A couple of tips:

- If you get paint donated, ask for current colors, not just cast-offs or leftovers which didn't sell in the first place. Make sure in advance that your clients like the colors. One group in Boston discovered this lesson too late, when an unhappy client became quite vocal about the donated blue paint.
- If time permits, your team could rake lawns, sweep porches, check for safety hazards, and/or do general repairs in addition to painting.
- If it's cold in your area, try to get all of your work done before you break for lunch. It's difficult to get volunteers back to work in cold weather after a good meal. If it's warm, on the other hand, make sure you have plenty of cold drinking water on hand.

And another thing... More tips for projects for seniors

- Allow for visiting time with each senior. Many elderly people are lonely or isolated, so they will appreciate the companionship. On the flip side, you can learn an enormous amount from their experiences and insights.
- If you're doing maintenance or repair work, make sure you have several people with appropriate experience on your team. "Day of" is not the time to teach volunteers to do potentially risky jobs. In any case, you don't want your work to look amateurish.
- Plan an end-of-project gathering for seniors and volunteers. People over 60 like to have a good time, too.
- If your group is providing food, get advice from someone who knows about senior dietary restrictions. You may need to avoid foods that contain such ingredients as sugar or salt.
- If you are holding your event indoors, make sure the site is well ventilated. It's much easier to heat a room up — by filling it with bodies — than it is to cool it down.
- Produce a hand-out for seniors listing area services and emergency phone numbers in large type. Ask your city's elder affairs department or a local senior center or nursing home to help you.
- Contact local medical schools or your community hospital about providing first-aid training for your volunteers. Also, alert local first-aid workers that your event is taking place in case of an emergency; if appropriate, have them on hand at the project site.

PEOPLE with DISABILITIES

PROM NIGHT. A few years ago, 4-H students in Monmouth, NJ, discovered that the students with whom they were working — all of whom had developmental disabilities — had never been to a school dance. So they took the matter into their own hands and threw a prom for their friends.

The Monmouth students worked with their local Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC) to plan the event. In order to cover prom expenses, the students hosted a dance marathon, "Dance for a Dance". This year's marathon raised \$12,000.

The 4-H students arrange everything, from hiring a band, to furnishing corsages for their guests (ranging in age from 16 to 70), to serving as hosts for the evening's activities, which include a five-course sit-down dinner. Each guest table includes one chaperone provided by the 4-H club, and one experienced ARC volunteer. At the 1994 prom, 42 4-H students and 102 chaperones hosted 331 guests. The event has become so popular that it now draws guests from as far away as Pennsylvania and New York.

Cathy Sullivan, who co-leads the 4-H effort, says, "It takes a lot of coordination. But when you can be with the guests, the look on their faces is more than enough repayment...It's an incredibly emotional experience."

This project takes a great deal of pre-planning and attention to detail. For example, chaperones must be aware of the medical backgrounds of guests, and must know who needs to take evening medication. For reasons such as these, enlist the help of a nonprofit, such as the ARC in your area.

Some other pointers:

- If you can't afford a professional band, check with a local DJ or with a school band. Ask local florists to provide boutonnières or corsages for guests, and restaurants or caterers to donate food. But if you can't provide dinner or decorations, it's not a big deal. Your guests will have a good time without them.

- If possible, set up your prom in the morning. It will be one less thing out of the way by the time evening comes around.
- Plan on a higher-than-average number of volunteers for this project. You'll need several people to serve as icebreakers, introducing guests to each other and dancing with the shyer guests.

On a final note, don't feel that you have to put on an event the size of the New Jersey group. They've been doing it for 11 years.

✓BUILDING RAMPS. Almost four years ago, Matt Wilkerson of Atlanta was asked to help build a wheelchair ramp for a disabled woman as part of the annual Hands On Atlanta volunteer day. Since then, he has added more than 50 ramps to homes, churches, and nonprofit organizations in the Atlanta area.

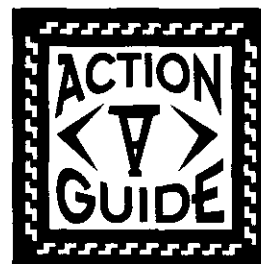
Wilkerson leads the Hands On Atlanta Ramps for Champs team, made up of 10 volunteers with varying degrees of carpentry skills. "At first nobody knew how to put these things together," he said. But team members — most of whom still participate in the project — helped one another master the art of ramp building.

The program has become so well known in Atlanta that individuals and nonprofits actively seek out the Ramps for Champs team. As for the volunteers, says Wilkerson, "We've begun to think more about the concerns of the disabled, and the time it takes for them to do something. . . In one day, you're able to make a major change in someone's life."

The Ramps for Champs team issues a supply list to the person or group requesting the ramp, including lumber and hardware; that person or group is responsible for getting the supplies. According to Wilkerson, a basic 18- to 20-foot ramp costs about \$450 to build. Make sure that your ramp complies with municipal, county, and state codes.

Some tips:

- Try to include at least one person familiar with carpentry on your team.





FACTOID

Did You Know

In the past four years,

65 students and

6 adults were killed

with guns at school.

201 persons were

badly wounded and

242 persons were

held at gunpoint.

(US News & World Report -
4/8/91)

- Ask a local agency that serves the disabled, elderly or homeless to help you find an individual or nonprofit that needs a ramp.
- Approach the person or agency requesting the ramp to pay for building materials, which can run up to \$1,000. Don't feel bad about it — they may be able to get funding from city or private agencies serving people with disabilities. Other options include getting materials donated or asking a local business to underwrite the cost.
- Check with your city or county to find out what codes your team needs to follow. Try calling the Fair Housing Authority in your area.
- Plan on putting in at least a full day's work to finish the project.

✓**COACH FOR A DAY.** Children with disabilities are, first of all, children, with the same needs that all children share. They need to have fun. They need to be with other kids. And they need physical exercise.

One group that brings adults together with kids with disabilities is Washington, D.C.'s KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now). Volunteer Alisa Miller has worked with children with a variety of mental and physical disabilities since she began volunteering with KEEN a year ago. Each Sunday, she leads a group of up to 100 children in activities ranging from aerobics to tennis to soccer.

Demand for the KEEN program is so high that there's a waiting list. The program is equally popular with volunteers, 60 of whom show up every Sunday for two-hour sessions. According to Miller, the program is more than "great exercise. It's a chance to be focused on somebody else for a change." She has become so devoted to KEEN that she now helps out with fundraising and volunteer recruitment.

**For this type of project,
it's a good idea to:**

- Have a volunteer-to-child ratio of one-to-one or two-to-one to make sure each child gets individual attention according to his or her needs. In Miller's program, new volunteers are teamed with experienced "coaches".

- Provide an orientation for first-time volunteers, covering such issues as emergency medical help.
- Plan a variety of sports or exercise activities to accommodate children's different interests and ability levels.
- Forget the regulation-length soccer match. When it comes to children's attention spans, we're talking short.

**And on the project partner front,
you may want to:**

- Ask local sports figures to lead your team in a pre-game warmup, or help you with coaching duties.
- Solicit sports equipment like balls or tennis racquets from large "mart" stores. Your volunteers may also be able to bring these items, as long as you give them advance notice.
- Work with your local school board or your city's parks and recreation department to secure a large facility or field for your project.

**The best advice comes from
Miller: "Lots of patience."**

✓**BUDDY UP.** Elizabeth and Ray Folkers of Maryland were looking for a way to incorporate community service into the time they spent with their three-year-old daughter, when they discovered the Community Connection program at ARC of Montgomery County. Through this program, they "adopted" Ray, a mentally retarded senior citizen who lives in a group home down the street from their house.

According to ARC's Jeanne Sanders, many people with mental retardation are isolated from the world around them. Although their families and nonprofit agencies can meet their basic needs, many of these people lack the contacts or resources to participate fully in their communities.

The ARC's Community Connection program matches a single person or family with a mentally retarded person. Volunteers can serve in three ways:

- as personal tutors, teaching an ARC client a particular skill such as riding the subway or balancing a checkbook; or

- as community resource guides, researching areas of interest to the client, such as aerobics or public transportation routes, and helping him or her gain the confidence to use community services; or...
- as companions to a particular client.

The Folkers were paired with Ray on the basis of their hobbies, interests, location, and time availability. Each week, Ray meets with the couple for activities ranging from shopping to baking cookies to putting puzzles together. Since the match was made, Ray has become a bona fide member of the Folker family. Moreover, he has become friendlier and more outgoing with people both inside and outside his group home.

For more information about ARC or a similar agency in your neighborhood, check with the National Association for Retarded Citizens/U.S., or with your state's division of developmental disabilities.

✓GROUP HOMES NEED VOLUNTEERS.

Although definitions of the term "group home" vary by state and municipality, in general a group home is a place where several people with mental or physical disabilities live. Group homes are becoming increasingly popular as an effective way to integrate people with disabilities into their communities.

One such home is run by Lorraine LeBell and United Cerebral Palsy in Stone Mountain, GA. According to LeBell, the goal of the home "is to allow our residents to reach the highest quality of life in the least restrictive setting." Two of the six residents work, while two others participate in day programs at other sites. The home itself offers daily one-on-one training to help residents become more independent.

Volunteer groups have played a key role in the home, coordinating recreational activities for residents, taking them on jaunts to city attractions, and sprucing up the house and its grounds, among other activities.

Agencies have come a long way in terms of the manner in which they deal with people with disabilities, according to LeBell. Instead of looking at what people with disabilities can't do — the norm up until two years ago — they're now looking at what they can do. "We're just a normal house in a normal neigh-

borhood," says LeBell. "That's what we strive for: normalization."

For information on group homes where your team can volunteer, contact area nonprofits, such as the local chapter of United Cerebral Palsy, or your state office on developmental disabilities.

And another thing... More tips for projects for people with disabilities

- Make sure to get some training in working with people with disabilities before the event. You can't be overprepared in this area.
- Choose a project site that is accessible to people with all kinds of disabilities. Some people may be in wheelchairs or on crutches or may have a hard time walking great distances. And make sure that bathrooms are accessible.
- Ask EMS workers, or local fire or police personnel, to educate your group about emergency precautions and procedures. You should also alert them that your event is taking place. In the event of an emergency.
- For more help in reaching out to disabled individuals and their families, contact area hospitals, your city's human resources administration, or local schools for children with special needs.



The National Exchange Club • Photo by Mike O'Neal

HUNGER and HOMELESSNESS



WASTE NOT, WANT NOT.

An estimated 15 percent of all food in U.S. homes and restaurants is thrown away. Add to this all the items discarded by restaurants, catering companies, and supermarkets and you get a sense of how much food goes to waste here in the land of plenty.

There are scores of places out there that would be more than happy, thank you very much, to take that leftover food.

Your team can collect items that might otherwise never be eaten, for distribution to shelters or other nonprofits that feed the hungry. Many cities or towns already have organizations, such as City Harvest in New York City, that collect food from stores, hotels, restaurants, and special events. Check to see if such a group exists in your city, and ask them about starting a recruitment drive. Visit neighborhood stores and restaurants to let them know that the service exists, and sign them up.

If your city does not have such a service, your group could collect food yourselves and arrange to donate it to a shelter or other nonprofit directly. Local grocery stores, hotels, and restaurants are obvious sources for food donations. Other places to approach include:

- Catering companies
- Special events venues
- Drug stores
(many of them carry food)
- Local dairies
(products that are still good at the "pull" date)

Another way to collect food is by staging a drive outside a supermarket. You could ask the store to match donations. See the "Drives" section in this book for special tips.

Add a personal dimension to this project by working with shelter residents to haul and organize collected items. Your team could also help to cook and serve a meal at the shelter or other organization for which you sponsored the drive.

✓ADVOCATE FOR THE HOMELESS.

The San Francisco-based Empty the Shelters

(ETS) has worked with more than 550 young people since 1991 to teach them to become advocates for the homeless. "Our mission is to end poverty and homelessness, but service is only part of the work we do," noted national staff member Chris Daly, 21.

Empty the Shelters runs several spring and summertime workshops that train participants in two areas: advocacy and organizing. Advocacy is the process of educating people — citizens and legislators alike — about an issue in order to inspire them to make positive choices affecting that issue. Advocacy projects can be as simple as a letter-writing campaign or as elaborate as an all-out lobbying effort on Capitol Hill.

Organizing is a bit more complex, says Daly, and requires the involvement of many groups working together. ETS works with groups that organize homeless people to give those people a voice. "As far as homelessness and poverty are concerned, those problems won't be solved until the populations affected do something. They have the most to gain by ending the problem. And they can come up with solutions."

If people are interested in some sort of one day project around the issue of homelessness, Daly cited the advice of the late homelessness advocate Mitch Snyder: "The best thing people can do is stop and talk to a homeless person. It doesn't cost a thing."

You might also want to contact the National Coalition for the Homeless, and find out more about their project to register the nation's homeless. In 1992 alone, NCH registered more than 200,000 homeless people as part of its "You Don't Need a Home to Vote" campaign. Although NCH will be celebrating National Homeless Voter Registration Week in September, there are always more homeless people who can be registered. For more information, contact Michael Stoops at the National Coalition for the Homeless, 1612 K St., NW, Ste. 1004, Washington, DC 20006; 202-775-1322.

✓FARM FRESH MARKET. One of the greatest problems facing poorer neighborhoods today is the lack of nutritious, quality produce. Stores are moving out of the cities



Christmas in April * U.S.A.

for more affordable space in the suburbs, leaving low-income people to pay higher prices for the few goods that are available.

In order to find a long-term solution to this problem, the Hartford Food System (HFS), of Hartford, CT, began a series of informal outdoor markets where farmers sell their home-grown fruits and vegetables to city residents. The goal of the program, according to administrator Liz Wheeler, an ex-chef, is to "make nutritious food accessible to people in the inner city."

In a unique variation on this type of market, Wheeler and HFS worked with their local Department of Agriculture to make farmers' market coupons — redeemable much as food stamps would be at the grocery store — available to families that need them. This twist provides an incentive for area farmers, who are turning a profit thanks to the creative program.

Usership is definitely on the rise at the markets, which see some 100 to 150 customers each day. In addition to organizing the farmers and their wares, HFS also hands out recipes and nutritional information to shoppers.

"The number-one comment we hear is, 'It's fresh,'" said Wheeler, adding that some people seem in awe that they can get uncanned tomatoes or corn. Although HFS and Wheeler still have a ways to go in luring the larger supermarkets back to Hartford, in the meantime they're providing fresh, healthy food to people who would otherwise go without.

If your group wants to do a one-day project, you could work with your own Department of Agriculture to organize a one-day "farm fresh" market to demonstrate the need for making fresh produce accessible to inner-city residents.

✓HUNGER...BANQUET? The world grows enough food to feed everyone — yet one-fifth of the global population does not get enough to eat.

Contrary to what many people believe, hunger isn't caused by lack of food, but

rather by the way in which food is distributed. People on the top fifth of the global economic ladder enjoy 60 times the goods and services of the people on the lowest fifth.

A Hunger Banquet is a dramatic representation of the inequitable distribution of the world's abundant food supply. The event venue is divided into three separate areas representing high-, middle-, and low-income countries. Participants draw different colored straws to determine where they will sit: with the 15 percent of guests who enjoy a gourmet meal at an elegant table; with the 25 percent who eat a simple meal, such as rice and beans; or with the 60 percent who eat only rice and water on the floor.

Popularized by the worldwide development organization Oxfam America, Hunger Banquets have been staged by thousands of schools, universities, churches, synagogues, clubs, and other groups across the country to drive home the realities of world hunger. If your team wants to do its own Hunger Banquet, you can charge an admission fee and donate the proceeds to a hunger-relief organization.

For more information on how your team can organize a Hunger Banquet in your community, contact Oxfam America headquarters in Boston at 617/482-1211.

✓PLAYMATES. Kids entering a shelter or other type of transitional housing often have acute issues to deal with, such as grief over having to leave their previous life, loss of trust in their parents, and depression and embarrassment about their homelessness.

At many shelters, volunteers play a crucial role in kids' lives by providing structured play time. According to Carol Dunlat, assistant director at Charlotte Emergency Housing (CEH), in Charlotte, NC, volunteer "play-mates" can help kids catch up on interpersonal skills and improve their school performance through activities like reading. The latter is particularly important, says Dunlat, in light of a recent study that reported a direct correlation between the number of times a child changes school (which often happens when a child enters the shelter system) and whether he or she will drop out.

?

Did You Know

32 million people in the US are hungry despite the distribution of \$34 billion in food by private organizations each year.

(USA Today 4/94)

Volunteer play dates at CEH have revolved around a variety of activities, ranging from watching a movie, to playing kickball, to collecting bugs. But the most important thing is for volunteers to just spend time with the children. "The greatest thing about these projects is that they make the kids' experience in a homeless shelter seem less like an experience in a homeless shelter. It's a real self-esteem booster for the kids when they can sustain a relationship with a volunteer," said Dunlat.

Play dates also provide break time for parents, many of whom are single heads of households. Many shelters plan career-skills or financial-planning workshops for their residents, and volunteers can use that time to work with children.

Volunteers can help keep kids living in shelters on the right track. "We're just a little piece of a person's life," said Dunlat. "But what feels like a little piece can have a major impact in the future."

✓REHAB A HOUSE. Most cities across the country lack adequate affordable housing, forcing many families to live in shelters. Although a number of agencies have made great strides in increasing the amount of shelter available for low-income families, there is always a need for more volunteers.

This is one project where you'll need to work with an agency. You can check with a local church or the housing authority in your city for an agency that is already doing construction/rehab work. Many agencies, such as Habitat for Humanity, screen the families that will live in the houses, and require them to meet certain income and "sweat-equity" criteria. For most Habitat projects, volunteers work side-by-side with the family that will occupy the house once it's finished.

Other agencies, like the Orange Mound Development Corporation in Memphis, work to rehab

entire neighborhoods. Volunteers are supervised by OMDC staff on two- to four-hour projects that range from construction to painting and scraping.

Don't worry if you don't have a carpenter or skilled construction worker on your team; rehab agencies are experienced at working with people without a building background. According to Phillip McCaull, who works on an OMDC team, "finishing projects [such as painting and scraping] are great for first-time volunteers because they're easy and straightforward. Everyone understands what the goal is, and you can see what you've accomplished at the end of the day."

You'll want to keep these things in mind:

- If you're using any toxic substances, including any oil-based paints, make sure that you'll be working in a well-ventilated area. If the space is somewhat closed off, take frequent breaks to get away from the fumes.
- If your group is bringing the paint, make sure that its a color acceptable to those who will be occupying the house.
- Watch out for children on the project. Often, neighborhood kids will come and watch all the activity. Maintain safety standards not only for your volunteers, but for any onlookers as well.
- A local builders-supply warehouse may be able to furnish your group with materials and supervisory skills. Many volunteers ask these stores for donations, overlooking the "people power" available to them as well.

✓FURNITURE BANK. A family that has been homeless finally gets a house. End of story? Not quite. Often, that "home" includes only the house itself, and the family can go months at a stretch sleeping and eating on hard floors. Not only is this uncomfortable, but it also takes a toll on a family's sense of dignity.

Tom Polk of Atlanta saw the need for a place where homeless families moving into transitional housing could "shop" for furniture and other household items. So six years ago he founded the Metropolitan Atlanta Furniture

"We're just a little piece of a person's life," said Dunlat. "But what feels like a little piece can have a major impact in the future."

Bank, which now serves more than 800 households a year, most of which are headed by single parents.

The Furniture Bank receives donations of new or used furniture from both individuals and local retailers. The items are distributed to clients referred through a network of social service organizations, government agencies, and churches. Each new client receives a starter "kit" consisting of beds and linens, lamps, tables, chairs, sofa, dressers, dishes, pots and pans, and towels.

More than 75 volunteers work with the Furniture Bank to pick up and deliver furniture, sort and repair donated items, and assisting families in decorating their new homes. Even so, the Bank is still in need of more furniture and more volunteers. Despite furnishing homes for 800 families last year, it had to turn away an equal number of families needing help.

To find out if there's a furniture bank in your community, contact your local Coalition for the Homeless, or your city or county's Housing Authority. If such an organization doesn't exist, you can work with agencies serving the homeless or area churches to provide similar types of services.

Other tips:

- Start small. Your group might just want to find furnishings for a single family. Pickup and delivery will take longer than you think.
- Any furniture you're donating should be in good condition. Try to make repairs before the day of the delivery.
- Don't limit yourself to individuals or furniture stores for donations; many of the warehouse- and mart-type stores carry furniture and household items. Likewise, builders-supply stores have lamps, tables, etc.
- Don't overlook area decorators. Not only can they talk to suppliers, but they can add the finishing touches to make a house a home.

✓BANK ON IT.

If your team lacks the time or resources to put together an event, you can volunteer for a local food bank. Many of these organizations can always use people to collect, sort, and distribute food. Look in the Yellow Pages or contact your city's human services department for names of organizations.

And another thing... More tips for hunger and homelessness projects

- If you're collecting food clothing, or any other items, have a recipient for them lined up before the day of your project.
- Make sure you have adequate storage facilities for collected goods. Don't plan on taking any items home.
- Check with shelters and other recipients of donated goods regarding any items they might not be able to accept due to health codes or other restrictions.
- If you stage an event such as a Hunger Banquet, or if you mount a drive, make sure to distribute some fact sheets or other types of educational materials to build awareness of the problems of hunger and homelessness. Nonprofit organizations or government agencies can supply you with facts.
- See "Drives" for more tips



National Association of Service and Conservation Corps



OUTFIT A FAMILY.

Feeding and clothing babies and small children can be costly for anyone, but especially for new parents on a limited income. Your group can help out by mounting a neighborhood drive to collect baby clothes, diapers, soap, powder, towelettes, cribs, car seats, and strollers for parents in need.

Places that might welcome your donations include:

- Hospitals
- Homeless shelters
- Parenting programs
- Battered women's shelters
- Shelters for unwed mothers
- High schools
- Group foster homes

Know where the goods are going before you actually collect them, so they're not sitting around your house taking up space.

✓**SCHOOL SUPPLIES.** OK — so maybe as a kid you weren't exactly in a mad rush to get back to the classroom; but at least you had that "awesome" purple notebook to scribble in.

For many kids whose parents are struggling, pens and pencils, notebooks, tablets, lunch boxes, and other school supplies are luxury items.

Your team can conduct a drive to collect school supplies for children who need them. Set up collection sites outside stores where school supplies are sold. Distribute a one-pager on what you're doing and why you're doing it, and include a list of suggested items. Keep all donated items in full view throughout the drive, so that people will be inspired to give by the size of your pile.

Many companies have office supplies (notebooks, pencils, and so forth) that they can contribute to your effort. Check with a local company's public or community affairs office.

If you need help finding a school that needs supplies, contact your local school board or superintendent. You can also distribute your supplies through a neighborhood church or community center.

✓**PERSONAL ITEMS.** Remember that set of soaps — still unused — that you got in your Christmas stocking? That shampoo sample — still unopened — that came in the mail? That perfume — still in its packaging — that you forgot to take on vacation? Donate them! More and more homeless shelters are looking for contributions of shampoo, soap, combs, and other personal care items for their residents.

Contact an area shelter or hospital to see which items they can use. You'll need to collect new products, not partially used ones.

A good way to get a lot of "loot" is to stage a drive outside a neighborhood drugstore or discount market. Have a table with a one-pager encouraging people to donate personal care products. Ask the store to match donations. You can also approach hotels and other corporations in your city to see about getting them involved.

✓**BUNDLE UP...**there are too many people out there without a warm coat. Many people have an old coat or two in their closet. It makes no sense to leave them hanging there when there are men, women, and children who can use them.

Last year, New York Cares collected 65,000 coats to distribute to New York City residents in need. The group set up collection sites in all of the city's commuter centers, as well as in local police precincts, and Chase Manhattan bank branches. Coats were then routed to a central warehouse, where they were sorted by volunteers and distributed to shelters and other community based organizations.

If your team wants to collect coats, make sure they're in good condition. Don't try to distribute the items yourself; it's much easier to donate them directly to local facilities experienced in clothing distribution. You'll also need a large area for sorting the coats, and a means of transporting them to the sorting location.

✓**READ ON...** Thwack. That's the sound of school and library budgets being axed across the country, forcing many facilities to cut back on the number of books they buy.

Last year,

New York

Cares

collected

65,000

coats to

distribute to

New York City

residents

in need.

At the same time, hundreds of usable books gather dust on people's shelves or sit in boxes in basements and garages.

Collect all those old or "Yeah, yeah, I'm going to get to it" books and donate them to a school or community library. Or, give them to:

- Shelters
(including facilities for the homeless, veterans, and battered women)
- Hospitals and hospices
- Community centers
- Neighborhood literacy programs
- English as a Second Language programs

And another thing... More tips for drives

Although a drive may sound like the perfect one-day volunteer opportunity, it actually takes quite a bit of planning before the event as well as follow-up after the event is over.

- Collect only what you are "contracted" to collect. In other words, if you've set out to gather food, don't accept clothing. Otherwise, you'll have a lot of stuff with no place to go.
- Check local health codes. Some cities, for example, may prohibit organizations from accepting sheets or certain types of food.
- Make sure you have a market for your collection. It's a myth, for example, that all shelters want or need clothing. Don't wait until you have 10,000 coats gathering dust in a warehouse before you start looking for someone to take and distribute them.
- Act as "wholesaler" rather than "retailer" for your collectibles. That way, you don't have to decide who's deserving and who's not — work that is better left to people who work directly with clients in need.
- Remember that if you're running a drive over several days, you may have a hard time lining up volunteers during weekdays. One group in New York City only collects before and after work in major transportation centers (Grand Central Station, Penn Station, etc.) so they don't have to staff collection points during the workday. Even so, someone has to bring in all of the collection boxes when the volunteers leave for work.
- Designate a group of volunteers that only goes from collection point to collection point, gathering items to take to the central sorting location. You also need to make arrangements to bring in your collection sites each night, and to store any leftover collectibles at that time.
- Make sure that each volunteer at a collection site has a fact sheet on your organization. You should also arm them with a handout listing distribution sites. They are representing your group, so you want them to be able to answer any questions about either the drive or your group.
- Remind volunteers not to distribute the goods at the site. Otherwise, you'll have a stampede of people wanting what you're collecting.
- Arrange in advance to have transportation to haul your donations and adequate space to store the items.
- If you're collecting clothes, you might want to consider the standard that one group uses: items must be in "wearable" condition, although they don't have to be freshly cleaned.
- Anything that you're collecting en masse can get heavy. Make sure you have some strong people on board. Also, you're better off throwing several items into garbage bags, rather than moving each item piece by piece.

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FACTOID

Did You Know

A kitchen feeds about
300 children nightly
with a budget of
\$5000 a year and
donated food.

(Scholastic Update 11/6/92)



Every day,
American
families
produce
approximately
4 million
pounds of
household
hazardous
waste.

GREEN LIGHT. Fourteen-year-old Marc Loisel, of Seattle, WA, was shocked to learn how much energy was wasted by standard electric light bulbs. "If every business in America started to use more energy-efficient lights, it would be like taking 40 million cars off the road," he says. If businesses — and homes — make the switch, power plants don't have to burn as much energy, leading to less pollution.

Loisel performed a "Green Lights" audit for his school, Redmond Junior High, as part of his health class. With the help of the local Environmental Protection Agency, he wrote a report about his school's energy status, recommending that the school replace existing light bulbs with more energy-efficient systems. Although the school administration is still considering his plan, Loisel intends to conduct an audit at his new high school, as well as to form a corps of kids at other schools who can perform audits on their own.

It should be fairly easy to perform an audit with the help of your local EPA. Carolyn Gangmark, Pollution Prevention Coordinator for the Seattle EPA, has helped Loisel and other students like him through the Green Lights program. Says Gangmark, "If the schools save money by using more energy-efficient bulbs, they can channel that money into areas that really need it, like textbooks."

The Green Lights program is one of a variety of EPA programs. The agency can also help you with lead or weatherization audits, and can direct you to additional resources in your own community. To find out more about Green Lights, Gangmark suggests you try your state's Department of Energy or local utility company.

✓EARTH CORPS. According to Kelly Wark, project director for Neighborhood Green Corps in Washington, DC, environmental problems run rampant in low-income neighborhoods where the citizens can least afford to do anything about them. "It's common sense," says Wark. "You have older housing, and the people have the least amount of disposable income to spend on things like weatherizing and recycling."

The Neighborhood Green Corps is part of the National Green Corps program, based in Boston, MA, which trains college students to become environmentalists.

Wark, 25, works with youth aged 18 - 24, to combat some of the environmental inequities found in some of the nation's largest cities. She and her team operate on many different levels, from educating inner-city communities about lead hazards to creating local gardens out of vacant lots. However, she is quick to point out that "we're not technoheads."

One Neighborhood Green Corps team works with the local utility to reach out to seniors in low-income areas who may be in need of weatherization — low-tech energy-saving techniques for the home. Team members will conduct an audit in a senior's home, then do the necessary follow-up work, such as caulking windows and wrapping pipes. Not only does the weatherization make the home more energy efficient, but it cuts down on the seniors' fuel bills as well.

✓HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH.

All those ordinary household products that the average family stores in its kitchen cabinets may be quite harmful to the environment if they are not disposed of properly. When hazardous waste products are poured down the drain, they go untreated into area rivers and other water sources.

Every day, American families produce approximately 4 million pounds of household hazardous waste. Your team can organize an event where people can either swap hazardous substances for other items, or drop off their products for proper disposal. Certain items can be reconstituted and recycled if they are collected in large enough quantities. In addition, solvents can be re-refined and burned as backup fuel.

As part of your project, offer ideas for alternatives to household hazards, such as substituting steel wool and baking soda for oven cleaner. For hundreds of other alternatives to household toxics, consult Nontoxic, Natural, & Earthwise, written by Debra Lynn Dadd and published by Jeremy Tarcher.

Don't forget to:

- Consult with an area expert, such as your state's recycling agency or association, on the proper handling, storage, and transportation of collected materials. Be sure to wear appropriate clothing, such as jeans and work gloves.
- Pay special attention to any children who may be wandering around the collection site.
- Check to see if your municipal collection center has limits on the amount of waste one person can bring to the site in a single visit. Arrange to safely stockpile the rest of the material until it can be disposed of properly.

✓SHADY DEAL, PLANT A TREE. Trees can go a long way towards bringing beauty and coolness to an area, whether it's urban or suburban. So get some volunteers together and plant some trees on your street or in a neighborhood park. With careful planning, you can maximize the summer cooling effects of your efforts. According to American Forests, deciduous trees that are planted to shade exterior air-conditioning units at homes or businesses — or that are planted on the west and east sides of buildings — are the most effective way of achieving summer cooling. Trees that shade asphalt surfaces such as parking lots are also big assets.

Your municipal parks department or city public works department can steer you to areas that need planting. Or contact the forestry agency or urban forestry coordinator in your state. Area nurseries can provide your team with trees or other plants appropriate for your site, while a landscape designer can work with you to develop plans for a specific park or greenspace. As for supplies (including hoes and work gloves), ask a local hardware/building supply store for donations.

For more information about tree-planting projects, contact American Forests (1516 P. St., NW, Washington, DC 20005, 202/667-3300) for a copy of Growing Greener Cities: A Tree Planting Handbook.

✓CLEAN A LOT. Many vacant lots have become overgrown with vegetation, trash, and other debris. But in many communities

across the country, neighbors are working to reclaim these lots, cleaning them up and planting flowers or community vegetable gardens. Not only do these efforts help beautify urban areas, but they also give a big boost to community pride.

After you've identified a lot to clear, you'll need to contact the mayor's office, borough president, or district officer to get permission to work on the lot and to determine if there are any local ordinances with which you need to comply. Once you've gained permission, ask your local high school, university, or county agricultural agent to help you find a botanist or ecologist who can help your group identify any vegetation present on the lot. He or she can also help you decide the best flowers or vegetables to plant. A local nursery can provide dirt and seeds. Make sure everyone comes dressed to work in jeans, long-sleeved shirts and work boots. Also, consult with your local recycling center for the best ways to handle and dispose of any hazardous materials on the lot.

✓GRAFFITI BUSTER. In the past decade, San Diego, like many other urban centers across the country, has become increasingly marked by graffiti — and San Diegans like Tracey Voss have had enough. Once a month, Voss leads a team of 13 San Diego Cares volunteers in painting over graffiti on their own patch of San Diego turf. "Everywhere I drive, I see graffiti, and it just makes me mad," said Voss.

According to Voss, graffiti on public property in San Diego must be painted over within 72 hours, or the marked structure's owner can be cited by the city. Her team of graffiti busters work in "primer colors only" on the same one-and-a-half-mile area of Kensington. Because they cover the same area every month, there has been an 80 percent reduction in graffiti, Voss said. Moreover, San Diego Cares is adding another team to the effort.

Voss's group works in concert with SAFE Neighborhoods, an agency aimed at making San Diego's mid-city neighborhood crime free. SAFE Neighborhoods provides the paint and supplies (and the barbecue), and Voss and her team provide the volunteer power.

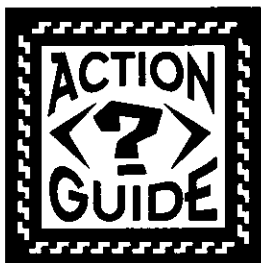
Community Impact



According to the National Association of Solvent Recyclers, hazardous household waste includes:

- Spot remover
- Lighter fluid
- Paint stripper
- Pesticides
- Furniture polish
- Nail polish and polish remover
- Scouring powders
- Oven cleaners
- Toilet bowl cleaners
- Adhesives such as Super Glue
- Caulk
- Paints and thinners
- Mothballs

MISCELLANEOUS



CRIME WATCH. When it comes to crime, Americans are mad as hell and they're not going to take it any more. Hence the dramatic increase in neighborhood crime watch groups.

Watch programs vary according to the size of the town or city in which they are located. They can be as simple as neighbors keeping an eye out for each other or as comprehensive as neighbors organizing street patrols.

The National Sheriffs' Association suggests these objectives for those considering starting a neighborhood watch program:

- Maintain a cooperative system of surveillance over one another's property, children, and so forth.
- Report suspicious activity or persons, or crimes in progress, to the police immediately and accurately.
- Encourage home security inspections and property marking by all neighborhood residents.
- Maintain a continuing system for distributing educational materials concerning self-protection and criminal awareness.
- Offer support to victims of crime and help them readjust to normalcy.
- Encourage citizens to come forward as witnesses.
- Help elderly or debilitated citizens and children to protect themselves against crime, and push for additional projects to protect these special groups.

In Albuquerque, NM, there are more than 1,800 neighborhood watches. Local police facilitate initial meetings, where residents are taught how to tell if a crime is being committed and how to report crimes to law enforcement officials. All residents receive a list of their neighbors' names and phone numbers.

Albuquerque watches are organized on a block-by-block basis, with each block having a captain. According to Richard Leonard, coordinator of neighborhood crime prevention programs for the Albuquerque Police Department, neighbors will often volunteer to patrol the block. Some watches have formed

teams to monitor the neighborhood and report any suspicious activity to the police.

Crime watch efforts in Albuquerque have paid off. "If a block has a well-coordinated watch program, neighbors can expect a 30 percent decline in residential burglary over a two-year period," said Leonard.

For more information on starting a neighborhood watch program in your area, contact The National Crime Prevention Council at 202-466-6272.

✓BUSINESS SAFETY. Crime is hitting small businesses in record numbers, forcing them to leave communities that desperately need their services. One youth team in Dorchester, MA, is doing their part to make neighborhood businesses safer for both business owners and consumers.

The Apprenticeship Team is part of the This Neighborhood Means Business program of the Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses. "Apprenticeship Team members," says FDNH volunteer coordinator John MacDonald, "learn not only about the safety issues challenging small business owners, but they gain valuable business skills as well."

Apprenticeship Team members work with store owners to improve store safety in several ways. For instance, they:

- Reorganize windows and aisles for increased visibility both inside and outside the store
- Post No Trespassing signs where appropriate
- Move bus stops or pay phones where necessary
- Get street lights fixed
- Escort customers, particularly the elderly, to and from the store

At the same time, team members are getting training in customer relations, marketing, accounting, and inventory control.

One of the most important aspects of the program — the "super piece," says MacDonald — is that members of the community get to see the kids in a new, more positive light.



Christmas in April • U.S.A.

Though some of the team members have criminal records or are ex-gang members, they are now working in their own communities for positive change.

MacDonald is thrilled about the the impact of the project on the Apprenticeship Team. "They are getting a community perspective that they didn't have before, and they're seeing the different facets that are vital to the community. They see that the world is so much beyond their small experience."

✓HAD ENOUGH WITH ILLITERACY?

Imagine what it's like not to be able to read a job application form. A newspaper. An instructional manual. Think of how frustrating it must be not to be able to help your kids with their homework.

An increasing number of Americans lack the basic literacy skills they need to function in society or in the workplace. Simon Ingham, of the National Literacy Hotline, says that the term "literacy" encompasses "the whole package of skills that one needs for life in modern society," including reading, writing, comprehension, self-expression, and basic math skills. According to Ingham, literacy programs generally fall into four categories:

1. Basic literacy programs, for English-speaking adults
2. English as a Second Language programs for adults
3. Family literacy programs for adults
4. Workplace literacy programs

One literacy program that works in all of these areas is the Upshur County, WV, Women's Club. Carolyn Stotts oversees the program, which serves a county of 25,000 people, a quarter of whom don't have a high school diploma. The Club has four sites located in churches throughout the county, to make it easy for students to get the help they need.

Many of the program's participants want to learn to read because they have new families, because they need better-paying jobs, or because they have children who want them to read stories - and can't. "One woman came to us when she got angry because she couldn't read her mail," said Stotts.

Women's Club volunteers use materials furnished by Literacy Volunteers of America as well as other resources tailored to individual students. For instance, one student wanted to learn to read so he could get a driver's license; his tutor used the driving test booklet as a textbook. Stotts says the educational industry has done a better job of producing instructional aids that don't "talk down" to adults who are learning to read, and she supplements these materials with newspapers and magazines.

Volunteers generally work with their students two times a week for at least an hour and a half per session. Any less than that, and both tutors and students get frustrated with the slow progress.

For more information about literacy programs in your area, call the National Literacy Hotline at 800-228-8813; Lilbauch Literacy at 315-422-9121; or Literacy Volunteers of America at 315-445-8000.

✓SUITED FOR SUCCESS. In 1990, Chicagoan Laurel Baer heard a radio interview with a woman on public assistance. The woman talked about the obstacles that prevented her from returning to work, one of which was lack of money for proper business attire, even for interviews. Baer herself knew she had five or six suits in her closet that were in excellent condition. So she came up with the idea for "The Bottomless Closet," a place where women coming off public assistance and entering the work force can go for interview and other business clothes.

Women come to the Closet from many Chicago job-training programs, according to Closet Executive Director Kathy Miller. On their first visit, they receive a soup-to-nuts interview outfit, which includes shoes and other accessories. Once they've secured a job, they return for a more extensive work wardrobe.

In addition to providing clothing services, the Closet also conducts professional-development seminars and workshops for its clients. "It levels the playing field for these women," says Miller.



International Odd Fellow & Rebekah

The Closet, which has served over 1300 women in its four years of existence, operates mainly on clothing donations. "A very small percentage of what we get is retail," Miller says, although the organization did work with nationwide retailer Episode to collect clothing from its customers.

Volunteers are an integral part of the Closet. Not only do they help with clothing intake, inventory control, office services, and marketing, but they also provide client counseling and shopping services.

Your team can collect "dress for success" clothes and donate them to a women's shelter or job-training program in your area. Make sure to identify a recipient before gathering the garments. You could also expand this project by helping the women to research jobs or to write resumes or cover letters.

✓**CANINE COMPANIONS.** There are "people persons" and then there are... dog persons.

Nashville volunteer Kay Caudle heads up a team of ten Hands On Nashville (HON) volunteers who wash, walk, and play with dogs at their local Humane Association for a few hours at a stretch.

According to Caudle, the project is one of the most popular that Hands On Nashville offers, and it's easy to boot. There are no expenses involved, unless volunteers opt to bring doggie treats or play toys, nor is any detailed planning required. Just call your local animal shelter and set up a date.

As a volunteer experience, Caudle says it's one of the best she's had. "Working with kids can be difficult; they can be moody. But here the dogs are so happy to see you. It really lifts your spirits."

✓**"PET" PROJECT.** Animals — from birds to snakes to rabbits to dogs — are some of the most effective volunteers around. More and more, people are discovering that animals can bring joy and hope to people in hospitals, senior centers, and group homes for the physically or emotionally disabled.

"We provide unconditional love to those in need," says Sharl Sternberger, a volunteer with the National Capital Therapy Dogs in MD. She and other volunteers — and their

pet partners — pay frequent visits to patients and their families at the prestigious National Institutes of Health and Johns Hopkins University hospital. There, they visit a variety of wards, from pediatric to psychiatric.

Sternberger and her dogs, Hamilton and Gandoff, have been volunteering for the past seven years. When the dogs get to the hospital, they are checked out by a veterinarian to be sure that they're not bringing in any illnesses; then they're taken to visit with patients.

According to Sternberger, people often will tell things to an animal that they may have trouble relating to a human being. The animals have a relaxing effect; doctors sometimes have an easier time drawing blood or performing other medical procedures when the animals are in the patient's room. And in some cases, as with patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease, the dogs may help to bring back memories of earlier pets and earlier times.

"Animals are really keen," said Sternberger. "They seem to know who needs the most attention. There are all types of animals visiting now — rabbits, horses, snakes, llamas — for different people. For example, kids who are allergic to cats or dogs love touching a snake."

Animal-assisted therapy has evolved over many years, to the point where there are certifications for animal volunteers. Sternberger, a certified evaluator for animals, says that dogs or other animal volunteers need to have a basic set of "social skills"; for example, they must know — and heed — commands such as "sit," "stay," and "down."

"I can have a really rotten day at work, but by the time I come home from a hospital visit, I feel great about what I've done," Sternberger said. "Sometimes the visits are mundane, and sometimes they last a lifetime. But most of the time, they stay in your heart."

Each facility will have its own rules for working with animal volunteers, as will each animal-assisted volunteer team. The Delta Society, in Reston, VA (206-226-7357) can provide further information about rules and suggested procedures, as well as steer you to an organization in your area that works with animal volunteers and their handlers.

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FACTOID

Did You Know

Requests for
emergency shelter by
families increased
13% in 1993 and 29% of
the total requests
for help by families
are not answered.

(American City &
Country April 1994)

Sigma Phi Epsilon:

Building Balanced Leaders for America's Communities



Sig Ep salutes Project America's positive efforts.



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VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT 101: TAPPING PEOPLE'S TALENTS

Tons of books have been written on effective volunteer management; however, they all come down to the same thing: **TREAT YOUR VOLUNTEERS AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED.** That may sound pretty obvious, but some people can forget that basic rule when things start heating up.

Volunteers are like anyone else — they want to be listened to, and they want to know their ideas count. As a project leader, ask your volunteers what they would like to contribute to your project. Find out what they think the project needs to be successful. And get their feedback after the service has been completed.

Managing Dos and Don'ts

The following tips for working with volunteers are based on suggestions in 101 Ways to Raise Resources by Sue Vineyard and Steve McCurley (Heritage Arts Publishing: 1807 Prairie Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60515).

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ■ Learn their names — and use them. Name tags are always helpful. | ■ Don't make unrealistic demands on their time: if they said they can give you four hours, don't assume they can really give you eight. |
| ■ Treat them as equal, vital members of your team. | ■ Listen for lame excuses of why work isn't done. It may be way of saying "get me out of this job." If that's the case, try assigning that person to a different task. |
| ■ Try to place them in a job which best suits their talents or experience. | ■ Give positive feedback when it is deserved. |
| ■ Give them specific job descriptions. | ■ Encourage humor. |
| ■ Tell them where they fit in the overall project. | ■ Accept their different reasons for participating. |
| ■ Be open with them about problems and challenges. Don't try to spare them details — they'll hear them anyway. | |



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Forming Committees

If you plan your project right, most of the advance work will be accomplished by committees. However, it's perfectly OK if some people only want to show up on the day of your project.

Possible committees for your team include:

- Publicity
- Fundraising
- Project partners
- In-kind donations (donations of goods or services versus funds)
- Logistics
- Volunteer recruitment

Note: Committees don't all have to be the same size. Some committees may only need two or three people; others may need eight.

Whether you're a project leader or committee head, there are a few things you should keep in mind when working with your team. In 101 Ideas for Volunteer Programs (Heritage Arts Publishing: 1807 Prairie Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60515) authors Steve McCurley and

Sue Vineyard give the following tips for working with a group, whether it's a committee or an entire volunteer team:

- Make sure the committee has a real purpose for being, and that your group members understand that purpose.
- Assign people to the committee to which they are best suited.
- Schedule meetings in a relaxed atmosphere.
- Allow some social time before and after the meeting.
- Don't hold meetings without a clear reason, and be sure to give advance notice of meetings.
- Provide a list of topics (in advance, if possible) to be discussed at each meeting.
- Encourage everyone to participate during the meeting. Discourage members who monopolize the discussion.
- Try to steer team members away from statements like "This is the way I (we) did it."
- Make sure to set aside enough time to discuss each issue on your agenda, beginning with the most important items first. Stay focused and don't rediscuss — and rediscuss — and rediscuss — each issue.
- Double-check for agreement on important issues.
- End each meeting with a summary of what is to be done, by whom, by when.

Vineyard and McCurley's 101 Ideas for Volunteer Programs offers the following suggestions for delegating responsibilities to team members or committee heads:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ▶ Use the "one-person, one-job" method of delegation. | ▶ get up-to-date on their progress. | ▶ authority you have delegated. |
| ▶ Be clear about the job, the authority it carries, the outcome you want, and the deadline for completion. | ▶ Delegate both "good" work and "bad" work to each team member. | ▶ Recommend sources of help and support when delegating jobs. |
| ▶ Establish a "check-in" system with volunteers to | ▶ Don't use your position to dump disasters on others. | ▶ Adjust the volunteer's workload to include any new responsibilities. |
| | ▶ Inform others of the | ▶ Don't oversupervise. |

Volunteers are like anyone else — they want to be listened to, and they want to know their ideas count.

Managing conflicts

As with any other type of group activity, team service can spawn conflicts. Remember: not everyone is cut out for every volunteer activity. Sometimes people volunteer with the best of intentions, only to find that their needs or talents are not well-suited to a certain task or project. Also, some people might just "cop an attitude." One negative volunteer can have a huge impact on the rest of your team, so if you sense a problem, talk to that person before the situation worsens. Also, see if you can resolve the issue by assigning the volunteer to a different job.

The following tips for dealing with project conflict come from 101 Ideas for Volunteer Programs. They can also be applied to any problems that may arise with a project partner.

- Clarify what the problem is.
- Determine common goals and areas of agreement.
- Keep conversations focused on issues, not personalities.
- Use simple wording to explain your position.
- Keep a positive attitude. Do your best to recall positive results.
- Don't discuss the situation with others.
- Set a limit on what you will put up with, and stick with it.
- Keep in mind that the best-case scenario may be arranging a tolerable working relationship.

\$MONEY MATTERS: BUDGETING AND FUNDRAISING

AT SOME POINT, probably fairly early on in the project-planning process, you'll need to come up with a budget for your project. Keep in mind, however, that your ideal project should cost little or nothing to implement. If you find yourself and your team having to come up with lots of cash to make the project a reality, then the activity should be modified.

Beware: projects can have "hidden" costs.

If you're planning on volunteers splitting expenses, you need to factor in such items as lunch, transportation costs, and admissions. If volunteers are providing lunch for the event, that can be costly. Remember: the point of service is to give time, not money. **YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE WEALTHY TO VOLUNTEER.**

Once you and your team have decided on a project, list all the expenses required. Don't forget to add in any supplies you might need. If you're working with a nonprofit, it's a good idea to develop the budget together. That organization might be able to absorb some of the project's costs.

As mentioned earlier, you can probably get area businesses to donate items for your project. They may ask you if you are registered as a nonprofit, or 501(c)(3) organization, with the Internal Revenue Service. If you are not a registered 501(c)(3), any contribution, whether monetary or in-kind, is not deductible under federal tax law. If you are working with a nonprofit, that organization is

most likely a 501(c)(3); in order to take a tax deduction, a business must make its contribution to that organization directly.

If you still need additional funds after approaching project partners, think about organizing small fundraising events to achieve your financial goal. These events



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should NOT be elaborate: you and your team will already have your hands full planning your service project.

Here are some ideas for small fundraisers:

- Car wash
- Bake sale
- Student art auction
- Speaker
- Movie night
- Talent show
- Lip sync contest
- Dance-a-thon
- Child care
- Yard care
- Old book sale
- Refreshment sale at your school's sporting event

GET THE WORD OUT: PUBLICIZING YOUR PROJECT

Publicizing a service project has many benefits. It can serve as a volunteer recruitment tool. It can generate widespread awareness of community problems and potential solutions. And it can inspire further action.

There are lots of different publicity techniques you can use to get people on board your project, including:

- Putting flyers in grocery bags, or ads on the bags themselves
- Hanging posters in store or theater windows
- Setting up booths at local malls
- Tacking up notices on bulletin boards
- Inserting a "stuffer" in utility bills
- Placing an ad or notice in church, university, company, or nonprofit newsletters

Media Relations

One of the best ways to let people know about your event — and to get others to take up the torch of community service — is to get your message out to the media, including local newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and wire services (such as the local bureau of the Associated Press). Though you may be tempted to nix a media relations effort because of all the other things you have to do, think twice: the power of the press is enormous. Getting media coverage of your project can help you draw people to your event, lend credibility to your cause, create good will in the community, and start people thinking "I should be out there doing something, too."

A media relations campaign can include:

- Distributing a calendar announcement to the Calendar section of your local newspaper to let people know your event is taking place. Check with the newspaper to see how far in advance you need to submit the announcement.
- Sending out a press release or "media alert" to newspapers and television stations prior to your event; they may want to send a reporter or camera crew to the project site to do interviews with participants.
- Contacting the photo desk of a local newspaper to invite a photographer to snap some pictures of volunteers in action.
- Submitting a public service announcement to your local radio stations.
- Contacting radio stations to see if they would like to interview your project leader or nonprofit partner about what you are doing.

- * To receive information on how to conduct a publicity campaign, contact the Project America office.

The National Exchange Club



LEGAL CONCERNS

Fear of lawsuits can drive away volunteers. You can reduce that fear with the facts. Lawsuits against volunteers are rare, and actual liability is even less common. Moreover, insurance ordinarily can take care of a volunteer's legal defense and pay a claim if necessary so that personal property and savings aren't at risk.

In any situation, however, the possibility of a lawsuit is real. Hurting another person, damaging property, or violating someone's rights can lead to liability.

Preventing Injury and Harm.

One purpose of lawsuits is to cause you to think carefully about risks and precautions, and to plan projects so that the desire to help doesn't result in more harm than good.

You can do a great deal to reduce the likelihood of an accident or improper action. Common sense can prevent or minimize most claims. In addition to relying on your own good judgment, you can learn from others about what went wrong when they conducted similar activities.

Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity



Not all pitfalls are obvious, though. Statutes impose liabilities that are not intuitive, and legal standards are constantly evolving. For more information about liability, insurance, and steps you can take to stay out of legal trouble, contact the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C., 20036; (phone) 202-785-3891; (fax) 202-833-5747.

For specific legal or insurance issues, there is no substitute for a professional. An attorney or insurance agent may be the best qualified to answer your questions.

Preventing Lawsuits

To reduce lawsuits even when things go wrong, volunteer programs may use several risk management tools.

First, participants can be required to sign waivers. Note that while a waiver can reduce potential liability, it may be invalidated in court unless it meets very high standards. The waiver must be clear and conspicuous, and it must fully disclose the risks of the activity. The person signing it must understand that he or she is giving up the right to sue for injuries. Also, a court will not uphold a waiver signed by anyone under 18. In addition, parents may not be able to waive a child's rights, although they can waive their own right to recover for expenses they pay for their child.

Aside from waivers, a good participation form is a valuable means of obtaining informed consent. Having volunteers read and sign a participation form that describes the activity and the expected risks provides a defense if the participant later claims he or she would not have participated if the dangers had been explained.

Finally, responsibility for an

injury can be transferred to another organization through contracts and agreements. A hold harmless clause can be included to shift the liability away from an organization and its volunteers.

Perhaps the most important point concerning contracts, consent forms, and waivers is that the forms and procedures **MUST** be carefully

developed in accordance with state law and the specific circumstances of the project. Therefore, assistance from an attorney is highly advisable. In support of a good cause, an attorney may volunteer to draft an appropriate form.

Insurance

Insurance generally can pay for your lawyer and any resulting finding of liability if someone sues. Thus, a lawsuit will not necessarily expose your personal property and savings.

Liability insurance policies that people buy mainly for other purposes may protect them as volunteers. Homeowners' and renters' policies ordinarily include liability protection against most accident claims, excluding vehicle accidents.

Personal auto policies generally apply to volunteer activity even if you are driving another vehicle.

Volunteers who drive a large van or bus should check their policies to see if they are covered for that type of vehicle.

A volunteer also may have coverage under the insurance policy of an organization for which he or she serves. An organization may cover its volunteers under its general liability policy or under a special volunteer liability policy.

For a special event, an organization may be able to buy a policy limited exclusively to that event, which would cover all participants.

To be sure of coverage under any insurance policy, volunteers should talk with their agent, and read their policies carefully.

The combination of insurance, volunteer protection laws, waivers, and a good measure of common sense and respect for the rights of others can control the risk of liability for any volunteer program.

Resource: Nonprofit Risk Management Center



Youth Volunteer Corps of America
Photo By Michael Regnier

GENERAL VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

You may want to adapt these guidelines to suit your project and distribute them to your team.

- Please be punctual. Late volunteers delay the entire team. If you're not at the meeting place on time and you miss the team, you have missed the project.
- If you're taking public transportation, stay with members of your group on the same bus or in the same subway car.
- If you need to travel by car, carpool with other volunteers to the project if possible. Make sure every driver can provide proof of insurance and every passenger has a seatbelt.
- When you arrive at the project, park your car with other cars, take your keys and lock your car. Don't carry unnecessary valuables on your person, and don't leave them inside the car.
- Do not stop en route from one destination to another.
- Make an effort to introduce yourself to the project leader and other members of your team, including any agency representative.
- If you are participating in a project requiring specific skills (i.e., construction) which you do not possess, ask the project leader and/or agency personnel for training or ask to be placed in an assignment more suited to your skill level. Do not participate in a project which you feel puts you in a risky or dangerous situation.
- When you're at the project site, stay in designated common areas.
- Let the team leader know of any problems as they arise. If an accident or problem occurs at your project, call 911 immediately.
- Follow all rules — even if you don't agree with them. You'll set a good example for the people with whom you're working, particularly the children.
- When you leave the project, leave with the other volunteers. Unless there are compelling circumstances, all volunteers should stay till the end of the project.

SAFETY TIPS AND GUIDELINES FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

- As project leader, your ongoing responsibility is to keep an eye out for safety risks. Are lighting and ventilation adequate? Are floors and ceilings secure? Does everyone have the proper safety equipment? When the work requires it, make sure to provide volunteers with protective eyewear, gloves, dust masks, and hard hats.
- Always wear long pants and long sleeves. Thick-soled shoes or work boots — not sneakers — should be worn. Every volunteer should also wear heavy work gloves.
- Provide an orientation for team members before the work begins. Delegate work assignments for the day, and make sure that all volunteers are comfortable with these assignments. Volunteers should be encouraged to discontinue work they find too difficult: lifting heavy items, working on a tar roof under a hot sun, climbing high ladders.
- Plan a break time for all volunteers, particularly if they're working on multiple sites. Each site should have a co-project leader.
- When working under dusty conditions, or with insulation, paints, or glues, take frequent breaks away from the offending substances.

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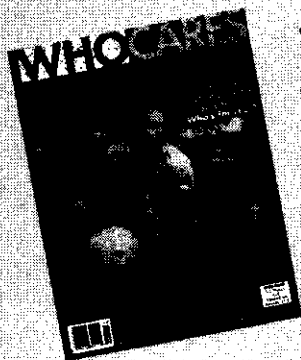
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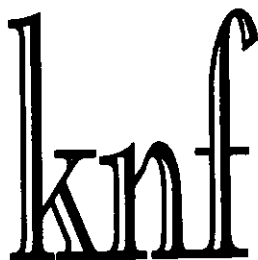
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