

4-H Community Service



**"Enthusiasm is contagious.
Start an epidemic."**

- Don Ward.

Planning Your Community Service Project

*Based on a
Community
Service-Learning
Model*

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

What is Community Service?

“Cleaning up a river bank is service. Reading a book about environmental conservation is learning. Youth reviewing results from water studies, presenting the scientific information to a pollution control agency and discussing the impact these results may have on future pollution control issues and our own behaviors is service-learning.”

—Angelia Salas, 2006 4-H Teen Peer Mentoring and Service Learning training

Community Service Learning

“Community service,” a well-known term in community programming, has its own definition: “the voluntary action of an individual or group of individuals without pay.” Examples of this type of service are conducting food drives, participating in adopt-a-highway programs, tutoring, teaching younger children, or raking leaves or shoveling snow for elderly neighbors. It is action in the community, involving community members – young people, adults and families – coming together to work on a common interest or community need.

Combining the definition of community service and learning and putting it in

the context of a community is what community-based service learning is all about. The Michigan Community Service Commission defines it as “activities that meet genuine community needs and require the application of knowledge, skills and reflection time.”

To be effective it is important that **youth** are actively involved in the process. They should be engaged with assessing community needs, designing projects to address community needs, and reflecting before, during and after the service experience. In addition, service activities are designed to meet learning objectives, not just to “do service.” Successful community service-learning projects include the five steps listed below.

Five Steps to Community Service

“Make a career of humanity and you will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Note:

The term “community service” has different meanings in different situations. Some may consider it service without pay; however, in most communities, youth and adults are required to do “community service” through the court system as punishment for various criminal offenses. This has led some young people to be reluctant to be identified with community service activities.

Follow these five easy steps and see for yourself that community service-learning can be fun!

Step 1: Pick a project by determining needs.

Brainstorm as a Group. Discuss prominent issues that need attention in your neighborhood and brainstorm ways to address the problems. Prioritize your ideas and select the best one. Think about what you would like to learn from the project.

Select From the News. Select stories that have emotional effects on your group. Discuss them together to select your project.

Conduct a Survey. Survey members of the community to find out about their greatest concerns. Do a project about which the community residents feel strongly. Perhaps community members will be inspired to help with your project!

Research the Issues. Do some web searches or go to the library and find out as much as you can about the problem in your community.

Step 2: Plan your project and get some publicity.

Good planning is crucial to any community service project. It’s what determines your project’s success. While developing your plan, consider your ultimate goals, who will be helped by your service and if the project is needed. Use the information gathered, to plan the tasks, responsibilities, due dates and other “nuts and bolts” types of components in a community-based service learning project.

For more information on how to plan your project, refer to *YEA! Youth Experiencing Action: A Community Service-Learning Guide* (4-H 1553), which is available from your county MSU Extension office or on the web.

In addition to good planning, it's important for you to inform the public of your planned community service-learning project. Public awareness can contribute a great deal to your project's success. You can help generate publicity by sending well-written news releases to local radio stations and newspapers. Well-written news releases are concise, but still include "the 5 Ws and an H": who, what, when, where, why and how. Make sure your news release includes a short explanation of your project and basic contact information for someone who can answer questions about it. For more information on writing news releases and gaining publicity for your community service-learning project, see *The Communications Toolkit: Fun, Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids* (4H1560). The "Toolkit" is available from your county MSU Extension office or the MSU Bulletin Office.

Step 3: Do the service.

This is the exciting part of the project because you get to put your plan into action. Remember this is a team effort. Everyone in the group should know his or her responsibilities. Do your best and have fun!

Step 4: Reflect.

As a result of your project, many of your club members should experience and learn new things. It is important that you take the time to let participants share their thoughts and feelings with one another. This process is known as reflection. Take time out at the conclusion of your project for discussion. Encourage members to bring up both positives and negatives. Be sure to have someone taking notes. These tips will be helpful next time!

Consider including a time for the recipients of the service project to reflect on the experience. This doesn't happen in many situations and can be a wonderful learning tool.

Tip:

You can order most of the 4-H curriculum mentioned in *Planning Your Community Service Project* from the Michigan State University Extension Educational Materials Distribution Center (the Bulletin Office) at <http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/mainsearch.cfm>

There are many ways for club members to engage in the reflection process, including participating in group discussion, writing in journals and creating web pages. Think of ideas for building this in before, during and at the end of the project. Reflection can be broken down more specifically to include:

Sharing: Discussing what happened. Sharing what actually happened during the event with positive interaction and learning from group members.

Processing: Thinking about and sharing what was learned and what was important, including what problems or issues occurred, similar experiences of the group members and how they felt about the experience.

Generalizing: Doing more indepth reflection and having the group members think and talk about what life skills they learned during the experience.

Applying: Applying what was learned to other experiences. Young people think about how they can use the life skills and knowledge they have learned in other situations in their lives with their peers, their families and in their community. For example, in most group service projects, young people learn to work as team members. This life skill can be used in the classroom or on a job. However, to understand this they need to reflect on their learning.

For lots of cool ideas on ways to reflect on your project, see *Reflection Activity Ideas: For Community Service & Service-Learning Projects* by Jessica Jens, Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 4-H Youth Development. You can download this 20-page booklet at <http://4h.uwex.edu/pubs/index.cfm>

Step 5 – Celebrate.

Take time to celebrate the completed service project. Be sure to find a way to let club members, key volunteers and funders who made the program successful feel appreciated. Provide refreshments, write a thank-you letter or pass out mementos of the day. "Goody bags" full of small candies with an attached thank-you note from the leaders can be an inexpensive and tasty way to show appreciation.

On the following page, "Your Personal Community Service-Learning Project Guide" is a journal for your young club members to keep track of their community service-learning projects from start to finish. It follows the same five steps previously described. Use the information just given in "Five Steps to Community Service" to help your members work through "Your Personal Community Service-Learning Project Guide."

Your Personal Community Service-Learning Project Guide

Your Personal Guide to Making a Plan, Carrying It Out and Discovering What Was Learned

Fill in the blanks for success!

Project: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Step 1: Pick a Project

This is what I want to do: (Write in one or more sentences specifically what you want to do in your project. Example: I plan to organize club members in a mass planting of daffodil bulbs in various public locations in the city.)

This is why it is important to the community: (Example: The flowers will beautify the streets changing the thoughts people have about the community, which can reduce crime.)

Great projects are designed to meet specific objectives. (Check off the ones that you want to meet.)

Through this project I want to:

- Engage in the valuable work of helping others.
- Practice life skills such as organizing, problem-solving and decision-making.
- Increase communication skills.
- Reinforce and further enhance skills and knowledge acquired in 4-H.
- Build teamwork, cooperation and diversity skills
- Develop self-confidence and a sense of empowerment that comes from reaching out and helping others.
- Practice good citizenship by making a difference in the community.
- Gain experience in the work world.
- Also: (please list)

Step 2: Plan Your Project and Get Some Publicity

An Action Plan may help you to get organized and to develop a time line once you have brainstormed what is needed to complete the project.

Fill out the following Action Plan table to help you get your project organized.

Action Plan			
(Add lines as needed)			
List the tasks, who is responsible to complete them, what is needed and when the tasks need to be completed. Make copies for team members so they remember what they have agreed to do! Post a master copy in your meeting space, so the team members can monitor their progress.			
What are the tasks to be completed?	Who will do them?	What resources are needed?	When do they need to get done?

Studies show that nine out of ten people say “yes” when someone asks them to donate their time.

Ask yourself the question – what problems might I run into? List those possible problems below:

Step 3: Do the Service

Take lots of pictures and enjoy the day, knowing that the team has planned for every possible challenge, and when the day is over, close it with some wrap-up questions.

What Have I Forgotten?

Leave enough time to gather necessary materials, to pick up last-minute supplies and to enjoy the energy that comes from doing these types of projects. There will always be unexpected challenges that come up on the day of the event, and a little humor in dealing with them helps the team members deal with the stress of the day.

Step 4: Reflect

Look back over your experience and complete the following.

This is what I did:

This is what I learned:

I helped:

I think that the project made a difference because:

My thoughts and feelings as I did the project were:

Next time I would:

As I look back at the objectives that I chose in Step 1, those that I accomplished were:

I would apply the skills that I learned from the project in this way:

Overall I feel that the project:

5. Celebrate

Take the time to celebrate your accomplishments.

My community service project celebration included the following people or groups:

What we did to celebrate was:

This is how I can share what I learn:

Adapted with permission from *Plan It Sheet* (4H1501). 4-H Youth Development, East Lansing:Michigan State University Extension, 1991.

Community Service Activity Ideas for 5- to 8-Year-Olds

Involving younger members of your club or group in community service is fantastic, because they are such willing participants. This age group learns best from hands-on experience, making community service an excellent way to involve them. Introducing 5- to 8-year-olds to service at this young age helps them develop a lifelong habit of service to others. Short, quick, easy and lively activities that are simple to complete help this age group succeed in their first service activities!

- A great way to let them help plan the project is to take them on a walk through the community and tell them to be “detectives” trying to spot possible service projects.
- Have your young detectives help recap what they spotted and decide on a project (for instance, picking up trash in the park).
- Adults and older youth can make the arrangements for the project. The kids’ participation could include making trash bag kits that contain supplies such as gloves for the cleaning day and other simple tasks, singing favorite tunes at adult foster care or retirement homes, planting flowers in local parks and community centers and donating their used books and toys to day care centers, domestic violence shelters and literacy programs.
- Once the big day arrives these youth will be willing to jump right in. This is the most exciting part of the project. Remember to take breaks, have plenty of water and recognize the good work they are doing, as they do it.
- This age group soaks up encouragement, so be sure to praise them.

Remember to prepare some sort of recognition or celebration afterwards. They love getting recognition award certificates!

Overview

Although they’re often overlooked when planning or carrying out community service activities, the youngest 4-H’ers can be a great asset to many community service projects. Five- to 8-year-old 4-H’ers are very willing participants who learn best from hands-on experience. Several reasons why they should be involved in community service-learning follow.

- Volunteering allows children to contribute to a cause relevant to their lives.
- Children begin to see themselves as members of the community and take a step forward in learning about their responsibility to the world.
- Volunteering boosts kids’ self-esteem, especially when they receive positive reinforcement from the adults working with them.
- Community service helps create a sense of self-worth as children share their skills, talents and efforts.
- Service at a young age increases the likelihood that children will develop a lifelong habit of service to others.

Activities

Some community service ideas that work especially well with 5- to 8-year-olds follow.

- Leading bingo games, singing favorite tunes, talking with residents and bringing small pets on visits to adult foster care or retirement homes.

“What we learn to do, we learn by doing.”

– Aristotle

- Children could also put on a skit or a puppet show.
- Painting trash barrels and benches at community parks and county fairgrounds. They can also paint over graffiti at these sites.
 - Planting flowers and trees in cemeteries and local parks and at community centers and county fairgrounds.
 - Painting and filling clay pots with plants for delivery to elderly or ailing people.
 - Making and hanging decorations and artwork at community centers, facilities for people with disabilities and hospitals.
 - Making sandwiches for local soup kitchens.
 - Preparing and performing puppet shows at libraries, hospitals and community festivals.
 - Trick-or-treating for canned goods.
 - Donating their used books, toys and clothes to a local charity. The items could also be sold at a group garage sale and the profits given to a local charity.
 - Being pen pals with overseas U.S. military personnel. (Younger 4-H'ers may need help from older members with this one.)
- Hosting a party to welcome new children into the community.
 - Collecting litter in a park or along sidewalks.
 - Decorating a bulletin board at a community center or library.
 - Collecting new or gently used toys for a shelter.

Things to Keep in Mind

A few tips to keep in mind when working with the youngest group of 4-H'ers follow.

- Remember that 5- to 8-year-olds are working toward mastering their physical abilities. Plan on projects being messy and taking longer than you expect.
- Let the kids suggest and decide what volunteer project they'll undertake.
- Provide a range of tasks and stations for the kids to choose from while completing a community service project. Switch stations partway through the project.
- Encourage kids to reflect on and talk about their feelings and experiences after they've finished community service activities.

“Service is what life is all about”

– Marian Wright Edelman

Community Service Activity Ideas for 9- to 12-Year-Olds

Overview

Early adolescents are at a great age to be involved with community service. Several reasons why they should participate in community service activities follow.

- Volunteering allows children to contribute to a cause relevant to their lives.
- Youth begin to see themselves as members of the community and take a step forward in learning about their responsibility to the world.
- Volunteering allows youth to succeed in an area different from academics, athletics or popularity.
- Community service helps create a sense of self-worth as youth share their skills, talents and efforts.
- Youth will develop a sense of being responsible for their communities and a sense that citizenship requires them to actively participate in their communities.
- Most young people this age love being a part of a group as this is a way to build friendships. Consider service projects that are done as a group.

Activities

Sometimes the hardest part of community service is getting started. Some community service ideas that work especially well with 9- to 12-year-olds follow.

- Collecting backpacks and school supplies for kids who can't afford them.
- Making bird feeders and setting up bird feeding stations at hospitals, schools and community sites.
- Setting up pen pal relationships with kids from another country or another part of the United States and sharing ways they can help their neighborhoods.
- Starting an after-school literature or reading club with younger kids.
- Painting trash barrels and benches at community parks and county fairgrounds.
- Planting flowers in cemeteries and local parks and at community centers, facilities for people with disabilities and hospitals.
- Collecting hats, scarves and mittens and using them to decorate a holiday tree for a local shelter.
- Making cards for Veterans Day. Celebrate with veterans at a veterans organization or veterans hospital.
- Collecting new sleeping bags and teddy bears for homeless children. Purchasing and decorating bear-sized T-shirts with fabric paint, then visiting a shelter to give the donated items to children there. Have a meal with the residents and do story time together as a group.
- Becoming a pen pal with an elderly or shut-in resident in the community.
- Helping serve dinner at a homeless shelter.
- Working as volunteers at a Special Olympics.
- Gathering gently used books and toys that have been outgrown and donating the items to children in foster care.

“There is no greater commitment than when people give of themselves. Volunteer activity is the ultimate demonstration of caring.”

- John W. Armerman

Teen Service Officer – A Community Service Idea for 13- to 19-Year-Olds

Many teens are ready to plan and organize their own community service activities with the guidance of the leader. Youth at this age may be eager to take on a leadership role and many may be passionate about a particular cause that they would like to become involved with through community service.

Teen Service Officer

Consider adding the teen service officer to your panel of club officers. The teen service officer plans, coordinates and implements community service-learning opportunities for the 4-H club or group for a year of service. This could be a shared position in which two members have the role of co-teen service officer. This position is for teens who like to see things accomplished and enjoy the satisfaction of helping others.

Responsibilities:

The teen service officer will:

- Motivate others to get involved with citizenship and community service-learning.
- Provide the group with project ideas.
- Work with the club or group to organize and plan community service projects.
- Handle public relations and get the project in the newspaper or on the radio.
- Plan recognition for members when the service project is complete. (Visit Awards, Recognition & Opportunities at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/commserv/commservawards.html> for further ideas.)
- Celebrate with the club or group over the success of the project.

Resources and Support Available:

The following Michigan 4-H Youth Development educational materials are available from your county MSU Extension office.

- **YEA! Youth Experiencing Action: A Community Service-Learning Guide** (4H1533) — Designed to be used with youth aged 14 to 19, the guide helps teams plan, conduct and evaluate community service-learning projects.
- **Civic Engagement: After-School Activities for Citizenship, Leadership and Service** — Program delivery strategies for after-school civic engagement activities. Available online from National 4-H After-school at <http://4-hafterschool.org/>
- **4-H Citizenship: Government Is Us!** — A civic engagement curriculum for Teens. (available fall 2007)
- **The Citizenship Adventure Kit – Public Adventures** — This curriculum includes a kit for grades 4-12 and a handbook for adult and teen volunteers. The series provides the tools young people need to define, plan, implement and evaluate an active citizenship group project. Available from the 4-H Mall at <http://www.4-hmall.org/>.

Skills and Knowledge Needed:

- Interest in helping others
- Organization and creativity
- Ability or interest in learning how to plan activities

Time Required:

- About 2 hours a week (This depends upon the amount of time it takes to do the project and the amount of time that the teen service officer can devote to it.)

Expected Results:

- Making a difference in the community
- Value and respect for diversity
- An understanding that our actions have consequences
- And many others

Contact Persons:

- County 4-H staff
- 4-H volunteer leader

Activities

For more activities for 13- to 19-year-olds visit the Michigan Citizenship, Leadership and Service 4-H web site at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/leadership.html>

“Nothing’s stronger than the heart of a volunteer”

– Unknown

The idea for the teen service officer originated with Judy See, Monroe County 4-H Youth Educator.

More Than 250 Community Service Ideas

The following is a list of ideas for community service projects. Some suggest collecting or doing something for a particular type of organization in your area. If you decide to donate your time to a particular organization, contact it to discuss the project before you start.

1. Hold an egg hunt for kids in a shelter.
2. Go “4-H Extreme”: Try a community service activity you’ve never done before.
3. Form a childcare group in your community.
4. Donate time or money to your local Red Cross.
5. Create a senior prom for a local senior home.
6. Collect baby equipment and supplies for new parents with limited resources.
7. Fill a laundry basket with household items for a relocated homeless family.
8. Help build a Habitat for Humanity home for a family living in a low-income situation.
9. Give your time to a younger child – plan a Harry Potter or other book-themed party at the local library.
10. Have a garage sale and donate the money you earn to a charity.
11. Hold a rally to encourage more young people to be involved in their communities.
12. Organize a give center where those who cannot afford gifts can get clothes, toys and other items. This is a place where people can find gifts to give to other people.
13. Mow an elderly neighbor’s lawn.
14. Participate in a “walk a kid home from school” program.
15. Participate in a violence prevention project in your area.
16. Teach a card game to an elderly person.
17. Lead a bingo game for nursing home residents.
18. Plan a “private volunteer recognition party” with live music and food.
19. Repair and donate toys to a shelter.
20. Organize a mitten, hat and scarf drive.
21. Learn how to play a game such as chess, and teach someone else how to play it, too.
22. Volunteer for a cause you believe in.
23. Collect, repair and donate used bikes to a community agency.
24. Make posters or displays promoting 4-H to put in local store windows.
25. Walk dogs from the local animal shelter.
26. Organize an “animals on the street” fund drive. Ask a local artist to assist in the creation of an animal statue that can be displayed in the street and then auctioned with proceeds going to the local animal shelter
27. Paint murals over graffiti.
28. Help someone improve his or her job interview skills.
29. Join a political campaign and work to get someone elected.
30. Make a quilt to give to a museum.
31. Collect blankets for a local shelter.
32. Arrange to donate your old working computer to an after-school program.
33. Set up a pen pal relationship with someone from another country and share ways you can help your neighborhoods.
34. Encourage your friends to run in a 5K race.
35. If your community doesn’t have a food bank, work with others to start one.
36. Record the inscriptions on grave markers in an old cemetery for a local genealogy society.
37. Help train Special Olympics athletes.
38. Set up a book exchange so kids can trade books they’ve read for ones they haven’t.
39. Learn American Sign Language and teach it to someone else.
40. Sponsor a health fair that offers free blood pressure, vision and hearing tests.
41. Hold a puppet show for hospitalized kids – make them laugh.
42. Become a library helper.
43. Organize a river cleanup.
44. Photograph a local event and donate the pictures to your local historical museum.
45. Build birdhouses and donate them to a nature center.
46. Work with the fire department on safety programs.
47. Sponsor a bike-a-thon and give away bike safety prizes.
48. Find out what a homeless shelter needs and then just “do it.”
49. Connect with another club and do a joint community service activity.
50. Help a kid by helping a parent.
51. Fill bags or baskets with summer games for kids and give to a parks department.
52. Help build and fill shelves at a food bank.
53. Organize a car wash to raise money for a cause.
54. Sponsor a babysitting class for a group of middle schoolers.

55. Organize and promote a community-wide cleanup week.
56. Trick or treat for canned goods and donate the collected items to a local charity.
57. Tell someone about what you have learned in 4-H.
58. Highlight your club's community service activities on a web site.
59. Research a community issue and create a display or flyers on it to share with community members.
60. Adopt a new immigrant family and help them connect to the community.
61. Teach seniors your dances and ask them to teach you theirs.
62. Collect used sports equipment that you can donate to families with limited resources.
63. Sponsor food drives for a domestic violence shelter.
64. Build a playground for kids with physical disabilities.
65. Teach tobacco prevention activities at a camp.
66. Deliver demonstrations on health and exercise in schools.
67. Update the signs on and refurbish a park trail.
68. Adopt an acre of rainforest.
69. Teach someone to read.
70. Improve your environment by starting an advocacy group and sharing information with your town council.
71. Make pajamas for kids at a youth center. Ask your local sheriff's department for its location.
72. Make a presentation about youth who are involved in community service activities.
73. Start a web site for your club or group.
74. Photograph old barns and homesteads in your community.
75. Coach a youth sports team.
76. Mail your letters with stamps celebrating different ethnic cultures.
77. Donate books or personal items to teens at a local juvenile detention center.
78. Test the health of the water in your local lakes, rivers or streams.
79. Organize a senior garden.
80. Arrange a clown performance for people with special needs.
81. Organize a hunter safety program in your community.
82. Plant a tree.
83. Celebrate other cultures with art exhibits, performances and poetry readings.
84. Build flower boxes for Habitat for Humanity homes.
85. Write letters for an elderly person.
86. Raise a dog to assist someone with a disability through an organization such as Leader Dogs for the Blind..
87. Learn your rights and responsibilities as a citizen or resident.
88. Perform an act of kindness for a friend.
89. Give some of your allowance to a charity you believe in.
90. Deliver holiday meals to a senior citizen group.
91. Collect crazy and fun hats for kids receiving chemotherapy treatments.
92. Clip coupons and leave them at a local food pantry.
93. Help a youth worker.
94. Give away hugs.
95. Donate old eyeglasses to an organization that recycles them for people with limited resources.
96. Paint park benches.
97. Organize a "walk a kid to school day" and learn about the kids' neighborhood.
98. Identify a skill you have and use a volunteer experience to help improve it.
99. Talk to police officers to gather after-school ideas for kids and teens in the community.
100. Thank the care givers in your family – do something special for them.
101. Visit people with AIDS who are in the hospital.
102. Join and help a national or local children's advocacy group.
103. Map your community's bike trails.
104. Get involved with your local humane society in controlling pet populations.
105. Make placemats with information about proper fireworks use and ask a local fast food restaurant to use them.
106. Start a career day at your school.
107. Make and distribute a brochure of local services available to parents.
108. Prepare ethnic holiday dishes for a soup kitchen.
109. Be a coach – start a soccer or other sports team for younger children.
110. Take time to think, talk or write about your community service activity.
111. Become a "little chef" and cook vegetables for your family.
112. Start a program to recycle athletic shoes.
113. Volunteer at a hospital.
114. Pick up trash.
115. Read a story about President Abraham Lincoln to kids at a daycare center.
116. Hold an "old video drive" for your local library.
117. Establish and maintain a demonstration pot or garden of native plants in a community park.
118. Help seniors with their shopping.
119. Dress up like President George Washington and share a story about him.
120. Contact your American Legion group and help decorate your town for Independence Day.
121. Donate suitcases to kids in foster care.
122. Help senior citizens install smoke alarms in their homes.
123. Shovel snow for a local community center.
124. Put together layettes for moms and dads with limited-resources.

125. Organize a campaign to raise money for park playground equipment.
126. Make a puppet show that promotes healthy living.
127. Involve a friend in a community service activity.
128. Organize a work day at the local farmers market to assist senior citizens.
129. Pick up litter.
130. Speak out against violence.
131. Teach a skill you have to another person.
132. Volunteer to help with childcare for those who cannot afford to pay.
133. Coordinate a community dance for senior citizens.
134. Arrange a pet food and supply drive for the local animal shelter.
135. Volunteer at your local zoo.
136. Organize a pet flea bath.
137. Make holiday cards for people in nursing homes.
138. Donate arts and crafts supplies to groups who can't afford them.
139. Find older adults who want to teach quilting, knitting and other skills to youth.
140. Adopt a monument and keep it clean and weed free.
141. Volunteer at service agencies that allow you to explore career interests.
142. Make posters and displays of safe and unsafe Halloween costumes, masks and face paints.
143. Contact a cable station and start a teen issues television show.
144. Organize a winter coat drive.
145. Volunteer to produce a community organization's newsletter.
146. Research and share historic contributions of Hispanic Americans or Asian Pacific Americans in your community.
147. Take part in restaurant food recovery programs.
148. Volunteer to be a museum guide.
149. Help out at youth league athletic events.
150. Establish a fitness course in a public park.
151. Preserve the heritage of others.
152. Create table arrangements for a soup kitchen.
153. Make a storefront display about the cardiovascular system.
154. Clean and repair wheelchairs.
155. Find out how you can help people to register to vote.
156. Tape record children's books for kids with vision impairments to listen to.
157. Find new ways to cope with stress such as dancing, singing and in-line skating.
158. Work with an adult literacy program.
159. Help in your local parks and recreation department.
160. Plan and present a boat safety event.
161. Entertain residents of a nursing home with a play or skit.
162. Form or join an existing teen group to promote humor, fun and exercise.
163. Take flowers to the home of a senior citizen.
164. Organize a letter writing campaign.
165. Collect toys for families who have lost their homes to fire.
166. Fill a shoebox with games for a neighborhood kid.
167. Help parents at a domestic violence shelter.
168. Collect baby items and donate them to a local charity.
169. Organize a public issues forum for your neighborhood.
170. Start or join a neighborhood watch group.
171. Lead a project for kids in an after-school program.
172. Volunteer in your community.
173. Adopt a zoo, forest, park or highway.
174. Sell your livestock animal at the fair and donate the proceeds to charity.
175. Make a window display on how others can raise a Leader Dog and ask a store owner to display it.
176. Help build a memorial.
177. Collect and donate clothes to the homeless.
178. Serve on community committees.
179. Hold a 5K run for a local charity.
180. Help a group of kids improve their computer skills.
181. Research your community's civil rights history and share that information with others.
182. Perform fun food science experiments with a group of younger kids.
183. Record and share your family traditions.
184. Create a campaign to get families biking and walking.
185. Organize an "ultimate Frisbee" tournament for an after-school program.
186. Organize a canned goods drive in conjunction with a community event.
187. Have a Halloween party for kids with special needs.
188. Take a lifesaving or water safety class.
189. Buy a fruit or vegetable that you've never tried and sample it with a younger child.
190. Lead tobacco use prevention activities with local youth sports groups.
191. Raise awareness for Special Olympics.
192. Organize a 4-H "Sew Read!" project for a group of kids.
193. Demonstrate home and yard composting in your community.
194. Do a puppet show at the library on why we need to wear bike helmets.
195. Start an after-school literature or reading club with younger kids.
196. Get permission to plant wildflowers in public rights-of-way.
197. Collect backpacks and school supplies for kids who can't afford them.
198. Do something nice for someone you know.
199. Donate the money from can and bottle deposits to a charity.
200. Help conduct a day camp for 5- to 7-year-olds.
201. Help serve dinner at a shelter.

202. Make a display to publicize your group's community service projects.
203. Offer an encouraging word to a friend.
204. Organize a farm safety program for kids.
205. Paint trash barrels for a park or county fairgrounds.
206. Organize a canned goods drive at a school dance and donate the food to a food bank.
207. Raise funds to help a family pay their heating bill.
208. Shovel someone's walk and don't tell them you did it.
209. Volunteer to make calls to potential club members. Bring a friend to your next club meeting.
210. Take pets to visit nursing homes or special education schools.
211. Plan a new, adventurous event for the young people in your community.
212. Ride your bike around your neighborhood and pick up the trash.
213. Take a friend's dog for a walk.
214. Organize a get-together between a nursing home and a youth center.
215. Find an art gallery and donate your visual arts project to raise money for charities.
216. Organize a small animal petting exhibit for a local festival.
217. Make and donate holiday decorations to a hospital or senior citizens home.
218. Start a "speak out on the importance of pets" kids' page in your local newspaper.
219. Collect and distribute blankets, pillows and clothing to people with limited resources.
220. Decorate a tree for a shelter with donated mittens, hats, socks and scarves.
221. Find ways to fight global poverty.
222. Collect and process items for disaster relief.
223. Organize a lawn mower repair clinic.
224. Volunteer for Meals on Wheels.
225. Help an elderly neighbor decorate his or her home for the holidays.
226. Hold a holiday clothing sale to benefit a homeless group.
227. Raise funds for mental and emotional health services in your community.
228. Organize and join in neighborhood social activities.
229. Participate in an annual holiday toy drive.
230. Collect pet food for an animal shelter.
231. Get pledges from local stores to support youth art and drama community activities.
232. Learn how to rock climb safely with a group of friends.
233. Visit someone who needs a friend.
234. Volunteer to help at your county fair.
235. Watch less than one hour of television a night and donate your extra time to a good cause.
236. Make, send or deliver Valentine's cards to veterans.
237. Volunteer at your local humane society.
238. Hold a "family traditions" night at a local nursing home or senior center.
239. Research and share historic contributions of African Americans in your community.
240. Hold an afternoon tea party for a group of 5-year-olds.
241. Pack and help distribute food at a food pantry.
242. Teach tobacco use prevention activities at an after-school program.
243. Work with County Parks Departments to design ways to help people with visual impairments experience parks.
244. Make a healthy bedtime snack for homeless kids.
245. Donate books you no longer use or have outgrown to a local library.
246. Hold a teen music concert for local teens.
247. Help a local environmental group.
248. Make sandwiches and cookies for a soup kitchen.
249. Tutor someone who needs help learning English.
250. Set up and supply bird feeding stations at hospitals, schools and community sites.
251. Sing holiday songs to people who are unable to leave their homes.
252. Paint a fence at a nature reserve.
253. Dress up and become a storyteller at a local library.
254. Weed a public garden.
255. Organize an interactive theater program about tobacco issues for your community.
256. Plant a tree in your community. (Ask for permission, first!)
257. Work with government officials to set up a hazardous waste disposal day.
258. Go for a walk with a senior citizen in your community.
259. Offer computer training to families with limited-resources.
260. Support a community cause and make a speech about it to a local service club.
261. Organize a sports league that focuses on skill development, not championships.
262. Write and read letters to elderly people in nursing homes.
263. Organize a community garden.
264. Help cook and serve a meal at a homeless shelter.
265. Make promotional flyers to put in grocery store bags for the Great American Smokeout.
266. Donate your garden produce to a homeless shelter or food kitchen.
267. Make first-aid kits for homeless shelters.
268. Become an advocate for diverse cultural appreciation in your community.
269. Build a wheelchair ramp for a person who needs one.
270. Start a recycling program at your school.
271. Help with your county 4-H riding program for kids with disabilities.
272. Read books on conflict resolution to younger youth.

273. Plan a fashion show for the public using recycled clothing.
274. Create a display with information about proper use of fireworks to be displayed where fireworks are sold.
275. Produce an “extreme 4-H” television program on cable television.
276. Grow a garden for a food bank.
277. Organize a community service exchange trip.
278. Help out at your local community center.
279. Help prevent youth tobacco use by organizing a skit on the respiratory system and show it to an after-school program.
280. Coordinate a homework huddle for kids who need schoolwork help.
281. Clean up a littered highway.
282. Contact a wildlife rehabilitation center and find out what could be donated.
283. Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
284. Volunteer to wash the car of a single mom.
285. Make cupcakes for nurses at a local hospital or nursing home to let them know they are appreciated.
286. Baby-sit for the family next door one evening for free.
287. Learn magic tricks and teach them to kids in an after-school program.
288. Research campgrounds in your area and create a brochure with your results.
289. Adopt a whale.
290. Have a bake sale and donate the proceeds to a children’s hospital.
291. Volunteer at a daycare center.

***“What we do for ourselves
dies with us. What we do for
others and the world
remains and is immortal.”***

– Albert Pine

4-H Community Service Ideas by Project Area

“Every year millions of Americans volunteer at more than one million non-profit organizations throughout the United States.”

(Volunteering: 101 Ways You Can Improve the World and Your Life, by Douglas M. Lawson. Alti Publishing, 1998)

Michigan 4-H Youth Development would like to offer this challenge to each and every young person and adult who wants to make a difference in their communities:

We “challenge a new generation of young Americans to a season of service – to act on your idealism by helping troubled children, keeping company with those in need, reconnecting our torn communities. There is so much to be done . . . In serving, we recognize a simple but powerful truth – we need each other.”

Actually, this challenge was extended by President Bill Clinton in his 1993 Inaugural Address. 4-H, however, would like to re-challenge all of you! We challenge you to get your friends together,

get out in your community and make that difference!

Not sure of how to start? Contact your 4-H staff at your county MSU Extension office. (Visit the MSU Extension web site at <http://www.msue.msu.edu/> and click on the “Offices/Staff” link.) Remember that there are many more community service projects than these waiting for you to volunteer! (Unless otherwise noted, the resources listed in this section are available from your county MSU Extension office.)

If you need help getting your project started, your county 4-H staff can help, so give them a call! And remember, there is no exercise better for the human heart than reaching down and lifting someone else up.

Take the 4-H Challenge!

Adventure Programming

- Coordinate a community drive to collect and repair used bicycles. Donate the refurbished bikes to a community agency that will give the bikes to kids. Partner with local police, public safety departments and businesses to make sure that each bike comes with a new bike helmet. (It isn't safe to recycle bike helmets!)
- Playgrounds and families go hand-in-hand. Have your club or group sponsor a playground pizzazz day! Spiff-up and fix-up a community playground. Celebrate your efforts with a picnic at the park and invite neighborhood kids and families to attend. Ask a local hardware or builders supply store to share in the fix-up and the fun!
- Start your community walking, running or wheeling by sponsoring a 4-H, family and pet-friendly 5K run or walk.
- Check out the bicycle and snowmobile trails in your area. Are they well-marked and well-groomed? If not, coordinate the effort to pick up the rubbish, update the signs and create posters about the “new and improved” local trails. Ask local businesses and community service agencies for permission to display the posters on their premises.
- Waltz the afternoon away with a group of senior citizens.

Work with a local senior citizens community group or home to coordinate dancing lessons for young people. Ask the local seniors to teach the popular dances of their youth to a group of young people. Then have the young people in your group coordinate a community dance for the seniors.

Animal Projects

- If you're in a 4-H livestock, poultry or rabbit project, you could raise animals to donate to local food banks, senior citizen centers or community shelters. Raise and sell your animals through the fair auction as a part of the summer program, then donate the sale proceeds to the target organization. Another way is to raise the animals, then donate the processed products to the target organization. Donations often are especially welcome during major holiday seasons. Individuals or entire clubs can take on this kind of project.
- Consider organizing a visiting pet program in your community. Members of any kind of 4-H animal project can arrange to visit nursing homes, senior citizen centers, group homes for the disabled or special education schools with their animals. People at nursing homes and senior

citizen centers especially enjoy seeing and touching farm animals. These visits can be a welcome opportunity for people to share stories and memories of their childhoods and experiences growing up on farms. Cats, dogs, calves, lambs, pigs, rabbits, ducks, chickens, snakes, lizards, gerbils, hamsters and guinea pigs all make great animals for visiting pet programs.

- Volunteer at your local humane society or county animal control office. These facilities often need individuals or groups to help with animal bathing, dog walking and facility clean up. If you can't volunteer at the facility, consider holding a fund-raiser such as a dog walk or pet wash day.
- Hold a "hug a hog" fund-raiser and educational event and donate the proceeds to a community project or other charity. Introduce the public to a hog and share what you've learned about raising hogs. One Ionia County 4-H club sold "Hugg-A-Hogg" T-shirts and took people's pictures with a hog. Proceeds from their fund-raiser went to the American Cancer Society.

Careers

- Older teens can use the activities in the *WOW! Wild Over Work* (4H1552) learning materials to introduce younger kids to the career exploration process. When they use *WOW!* to work with younger kids, teens have the chance to develop their own leadership skills and to provide valuable community service. They're gaining skills for the workforce, too! For a copy of this curriculum, contact Laura Allen, Career Education Coordinator, at lacourse@msu.edu.
- Teens can teach younger youth or their peers about being an entrepreneur or how to manage their money wisely.
- Teens could research companies that allow group tours and be a tour guide for a youth group or 4-H club meeting.

Citizenship and Leadership

- Help a 4-H leader plan and conduct special activities or programs for a family night.
- Work with a 4-H leader and help club members plan and organize a community service project.
- Teach a skill at a 4-H Afterschool program, 4-H workshop, summer recreational program, day care center, teen center, senior citizens center or another place that welcomes volunteers.
- Explore printed resources available to teens about an issue you are concerned with. Write a booklet or information sheet and ask the library to display it.
- Investigate the needs of a community center. Organize a 4-H club to plan and conduct special activities or programs for a family night at the center based on one of those needs.
- Design and create a small discussion group of teens close to your own age. Be a mentor to a younger youth.
- Look around your community and organize a series of

community speakers to educate or promote awareness in the community about an issue you are interested in.

- Become an active member of a county or teen council, youth advisory committee or other group outside 4-H. Find a creative way to share your experiences with other 4-H members.
- Send letters to elected officials about a topic that concerns you. Organize an event to raise awareness of this topic to generate energy and action. Present your findings to a local governmental board.
- Do volunteer work with a social service organization. Help get other youth interested in volunteering with the same organization so that you can ensure further volunteer involvement after your service is completed.
- Organize 4-H club members to teach projects or skills at a summer recreational program, day care center, teen center, senior citizens center or another place that welcomes volunteers.
- Lead other club members in promoting 4-H to local schools, community organizations and media. Try getting the word out about the benefits, accomplishments and experiences of 4-H through newspapers, radio, TV, school or window displays. Develop a web page to promote local 4-H activities.
- Explore printed resources available to teens about an issue you are concerned with. If there is a need, develop a creative way to get your message out. Organize and involve other club members in creating a booklet, organizing a small newspaper or magazine, developing a web site or exploring other media outlets.
- Be creative and insightful; design your own project based on the needs of your community and resources available to you.
- Attend Citizenship Washington Focus, the Wonders of Washington or 4-H Capitol Experience (<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/capexp.html>) and join a political campaign. When you return, you'll be prepared to put what you've learned to use as an advocate for a cause you feel strongly about or by sharing what you've learned with younger kids.

Clothing and Textiles

- Help sort donated coats, used blankets and other winter clothing such as jackets, scarves, hats, mittens and gloves by size, type and state of repair. Use any cash donations to buy new snowsuits and coats in sizes most needed but not often donated.
- Help provide mothers living in low-income situations with basic baby items necessary for the first months of their infants' lives. Use grant money, donations or funds your group has raised to put together layettes from items purchased in your county stores. The layettes could include one infant gown, one receiving blanket, one combination garment and one crib sheet. Meet with the managers of local stores to compare selections and prices on infant

merchandise. After you put together the packages, a local community services agency could distribute them to these mothers.

- Make, adapt or repair clothing for people who are unable to leave their homes or residents of nursing homes, other group homes or homeless shelters.
- Plan and conduct (or help with) a clothing drive for Goodwill Industries or hold a “Christmas in November” (or May or July or whatever month works for your group) clothing sale to benefit a worthy cause.
- Make a community service exhibit or poster on clothing or textiles related topics. For example, you could make a poster urging joggers and bicyclists to wear reflective clothing if they’re out after dark. Your poster or exhibit with examples of safe and unsafe Halloween costumes, masks and face paints could help parents and kids settle on the perfect look for Halloween. You could prepare a poster on clothing care and stain removal and ask permission to post it in a local laundromat.
- Older teens could use the Michigan 4-H “Sew, Read!” program with 5- to 8-year-olds in after-school programs and libraries. The group could use *Sew, Read! The Boy and the Quilt* (4H1561), a kit centered on the book, *The Boy and the Quilt*, and make a quilt to donate to a homeless shelter or senior citizens center.

Clowning

- Consider arranging a 4-H clown performance for people with special needs, such as residents of nursing homes, facilities for people with disabilities, medical care facilities and VFW children’s homes. (Before any such visit, an adult should meet with the facility administrator and tour the facility. The adult should tell the 4-H’ers about the facility and the special needs of the clientele.) 4-H clowns may also participate in community events such as parades and festivals, and visit day care centers and library story hours.
- Paint hearts, flowers, diamonds, zigzags, suns, moons, stars, comets, ladybugs, snakes or other fun and simple shapes on kids’ faces at a festival or fund-raiser. Use water-based cosmetic paints (such as Kryolan, Mehron or Snazroo) purchased from a clown supplier. Apply the paint with cotton swabs or paint brushes (sable works best). Be sure to bring a mirror so the kids can admire your handiwork!

Communications

- Create posters - Kids can create posters that include information about local projects, events or community service opportunities. Posters could be placed in schools, libraries, grocery stores and other businesses to promote 4-H and the positive ways in which kids are involved in their communities. *The Communications Toolkit: Fun Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids* (4H1560) has a section on visual communications and activities to help young people learn how to create effective posters. *The*

Communications Toolkit is available through your county MSU Extension office and online from the Michigan State University Extension Educational Materials Distribution Center (the Bulletin Office) at <http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/mainsearch.cfm>.

- Make speeches - Involve young people in giving talks and making speeches to local service clubs, chambers of commerce and school assemblies, and in other settings. Kids can share the many positive things they’re doing to help make the community a better place to live and work. *The Communications Toolkit: Fun Skill-Building Activities to Do With Kids* (see above) has a section on verbal communications that includes activities to help young people improve their ability to speak in public.
- Create television ads and programs - Work with your local cable television company and get young people involved in producing television programs. Kids could produce and host a program that focuses on how young people can and are making a difference in their community. Kids who’ve been involved in community service projects could be featured talking about their projects and why they get involved. The young people could promote future opportunities and events and appeal for adults to become involved. The Communications Toolkit includes a section on media and technology that has information about building video production skills.

Environmental Education

- Project F.I.S.H. (Friends Involved in Sportfishing Heritage) - Think about a good fishing spot in your community. Is it a stream, pond, small lake or fishing pier? Whatever fishing site comes to mind, it probably needs an occasional cleaning. Worm containers, fishing line, pop cans and lost tackle are just a few of the items you may find littering your favorite site. Create a cleanup crew to deal with this messy situation! Connect with another fishing group or adults you know who like to fish. Decide on a cleanup day. Collect the supplies you’ll need, such as trash bags and rubber gloves. Depending on the time of the year, you may also need bug spray. Wear sturdy boots or shoes you won’t mind getting wet and dirty. You and your friends will all enjoy fishing more in a litter-free area that you’ve helped clean up. Happy fishing!
- Prepare and deliver an educational talk or demonstration about beneficial insects (“good bugs”) and environmentally responsible ways to handle “bad bugs.” Your county MSU Extension agriculture educator or pest scout can help you learn about how farmers are controlling insects more effectively with integrated pest management techniques.

FOLKPATTERNS

- Photograph old barns and farmsteads in your community.
- Hold a “family traditions” night at a local nursing home or senior center.

- Record the grave markers in an old cemetery for a local genealogy society or library.
- Interview people at nursing homes, senior citizens centers and farmers markets about heirloom vegetable and flower varieties they or their families may have grown.

Food, Nutrition and Fitness

- Talk to other 4-H clubs and groups in your county about how to handle food safely at horse shows, fairs and other events. Your county MSU Extension home economist and *Selling Food for Fun and Profit - Doing It Safely* (E2578) are great resources on the topic. *Selling Food for Fun and Profit* is available through your county MSU Extension office and online as a PDF and for purchase from the Michigan State University Extension Educational Materials Distribution Center (the Bulletin Office) at <http://web2.msue.msu.edu/bulletins/mainsearch.cfm>.
- Volunteer at a local homeless shelter or soup kitchen. It's not just for holidays!

Inclusive Programs

- Volunteer as a sidewalker, horse leader, fund-raiser or aide with your county 4-H PEP program and help young people with disabilities enjoy a horsebackriding experience.
- If you own a gentle, well-trained horse or pony, have it evaluated by your county 4-H PEP program to see whether it would qualify for use in the program. You and your horse could become program volunteers!
- Evaluate your own 4-H club or group to make sure that you're as accessible as possible for kids with disabilities. Let your county MSU Extension office know that you're willing to add members who may have disabilities.

Photography

- Photograph a community event such as a parade, ethnic festival or sporting event. Photograph visiting important people such as your state and federal legislators or authors who visit local bookstores. Take notes on all your photographs in a small notebook you can carry in your pocket or in your camera bag. Record who is in the photo, where and when it was taken, what is happening in the photo and who (you) took the photo. Mount your best photos and create a photo story of the event. Donate a copy of the photo story to your local historical museum.

Plants, Soils and Gardening

- Donate any extra produce from your garden to a local homeless shelter or food kitchen. Or work with a community agency to set up a community garden site for people who don't have their own land.

- Help the residents of a nursing home or other group home set up and maintain container gardens of vegetables and flowers.
- If a wild area near you is destined for development, catalog the wildflowers and other plants growing there. Be sure to obtain a permit before removing any protected or endangered wildflowers!

Science and Technology Projects

- Organize a recycling program. In addition to providing a much-needed service to communities, this project also can give young people the chance to learn about local government. The event can run for just one day or be a long-term project that runs over many months with the support of local government agencies and area businesses.
- Plan a park clean-up day. Members of environmental science clubs or any other group can help clean up wetland areas, lakes and ponds, natural areas or playgrounds. Your group also might consider planning and designing a play area for your community. Kids who are interested in engineering, landscaping or construction can all find ways to share their interests and talents to better their communities.
- Work with the civil engineering department in your community to help conduct a community water quality survey. You can learn more about water treatment plants and the things that affect the water we drink.
- Start or volunteer to help with an existing community hazardous waste disposal day. Work with your local government officials and area businesses to plan, promote and conduct one.
- Disaster preparedness is a great project for members living in tornado- or flood-prone areas. Young people can develop and present a disaster preparedness program at local schools, day care facilities or after-school child care facilities to help other children know what to do in case of a tornado or flood.
- Members involved in 4-H small engine projects can hold lawn mower repair clinics in their communities. Consider teaching basic lawn mower maintenance or offering lawn mower repair services to senior citizens or families living in low-income situations in your community.

Shooting Sports

- Design a brochure or display for the county fair on firearm and bow safety.
- Older teens could volunteer as resource people or aides with a local hunter safety program.



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