

# HOW TO DEVELOP SERVICE PROJECTS

In Sea Scouting, developing service projects is one way that a Ship ensures that service is an integral part of its year's program of activities. The purpose of this how-to handout is to give you some ideas on developing your service projects. In particular, it describes one method that will help you first identify needs for service, and second, identify projects that address those needs.

## NEED-TO-SOLUTION METHOD

Performing a service project will mean the most to you and to the people you're serving when you respond in some way to a *need you see* within your community. It's important that (1) your Ship *feels strongly* about the needs you develop service projects for, and (2) you believe your solutions can do something about those needs, can actually make a difference. The following steps will help you identify both needs and solutions:

**1. Brainstorm a list of service needs.** Always begin in the brainstorming mode. In this step, simply list any needs for service that exist in your community. Think about experiences you've had, articles you've read in the local newspaper, or things you've heard about. Picture people in your community...see what they might need help with. At this point, just let the ideas come. Don't worry about judging your service needs, making decisions, or choosing the words to express a need. The following is a sample list of needs that demonstrate both a variety of ideas and the authentic way in which the brainstormers in this situation expressed their ideas:

- Do something about interesting people in reading...especially kids.
- What about people who can't read?
- Make riding in a bus safe.
- Find out what older people who still live in their homes in our neighborhood need help with.
- Get kids interested in doing something worthwhile during the summer.
- Is there anything we can do in emergency room situations?...like help people fill out forms or just sit with them?
- I think we need to do something about kids drinking and using drugs.
- What about helping somehow with the Chesapeake Bay Clean-up?
- What about all the dogs and cats at the Humane Society that nobody knows about?
- I think we should do something for children who have been abused or are missing.
- Can we do something to clean up our streams and highways?
- I think people need to laugh more, enjoy life. Everyone seems so uptight and serious all the time.
- I'm worried about all the garbage we have...and I think people should know more about the importance of saving trees and holding ponds...and getting rid of some of the pesticides we're eating.
- Is there anything we can do to make children happy?
- What can we do to help feed the poor or starving people in our community?

**2. Pare and prioritize your list.** Once you have gathered a list of ideas, it's time to discuss the various ideas on the list. In this step, you are sorting through your ideas in order to weigh them. Your goal is to pare down your large list to the top three to five service needs. This will allow you to develop enough service projects to intersperse throughout your year's program of activities. In your discussion, ask questions like: Which of these needs have the most meaning to our Ship? Why? Do we see any concerns that are common or part of several needs? What needs do we really feel strongly about?

**3. Brainstorm solution ideas.** You now have a pared-down prioritized list of service needs. Opposite to those needs, develop a brainstorming list of possible solutions (ideas for service projects) for each of the three to five needs. Go through the same process to develop this list as you did when you developed your list of service needs.

**4. Select your service projects.** Discuss and weigh the various ideas on your list for service projects. Select the best service project idea for each need. In your discussion, ask questions like: What do we like best...least about each of these ideas? How could we use the career or special interest of our Ship in any of these service projects? Does this project idea really address the need we want to do something about? Will it make a difference in people's lives? Will our Ship mates get excited about carrying out this service project? How will the people we're trying to help feel about our service project?

**5. Carry out the seven steps for planning an individual activity.** A service project is an activity, and it should be planned like any other individual activity. Select an activity chairperson and activity committee for each service project. They are responsible for carrying out the seven steps for planning an individual activity and for filling out an activity Planner. In step 2, (identify needed resources), the Ship Committee should be consulted to help identify and contact community agencies that might provide assistance with each service project.

A very good service project can be very simple. It may never attract the attention of others. That doesn't mean that it can't do as much good as those projects that garner a great deal of attention. Attention is not the goal; serving is. Sometimes, it's the little things we do consistently that make a real difference in someone's life. For example, think about an older person who has always loved to read but who can no longer go to the library. What if you went with this person or went by yourself to the library to pick up and return books each week?

The ultimate goal of serving is to help people in such a way that they stand *straighter and stronger*. They see again that they have something worthwhile to contribute, and they, in turn, also become servants.