

MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY 2005: BEST PRACTICES

Reported by Job Corps Participants 1999-2004

"While perhaps not a unique thought, we found it helpful to maintain year-round linkages for service opportunities. For instance, we know that our adopted highway must be cleaned twice a year. Having that service project option already in place makes it easier to organize and plan community-wide service activities for special events such as Make A Difference Day."

Best Practice submitted by Bonnie Eager, BCL, Columbia Basin Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

- Establish new relationships with employers, community-based organizations, and individuals within the local community.
- Increase service participation levels of students and staff.
- Make sure Job Corps volunteers understand *why* they are volunteering.
- Plan service activities that are beneficial to the recipients and rewarding to the Job Corps volunteers.
- Promote the Job Corps program — have students wear t-shirts and put up Job Corps banners at your volunteer site.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Do not underestimate how much pre-planning is needed. Start planning at least 4-6 weeks ahead (that means mid- to late-September).
- Host an orientation for staff and students regarding Make A Difference Day. Solicit ideas from students and staff. Provide written information about the plans in advance and make sure everyone understands his or her role.
- Promote (advertise) activity on-center. Make fliers to get students excited about participating.
- Order extra copies of the official Make A Difference Day pamphlet to hand out on-center and in the community to encourage participation and promote your project.
- Suggest that students visit the www.makeadifferenceday.com Web site beforehand to learn more about the event and discover potential community-service projects.
- Increase student participation and engagement by assigning responsibility for planning and activities. Identify student leaders to manage individual projects and volunteers.

- Involve the Student Government Association in every step, from planning to follow-up.
- Look for service opportunities that will let students practice their trades.
- Get project ideas and support from your local volunteer center. Ask to be placed on your local volunteer center's mailing list to keep abreast of area volunteer opportunities.
- Visit www.PointsofLight.org to find the volunteer center in your area.
- Hold a contest among students to come up with the best method of promoting Make A Difference Day both on-center and in the community.
- Communicate with all involved (students, staff, recipients of service, partners, contacts at activity site, etc.) throughout the planning process.
- Connect with residential living staff in advance to coordinate wake-up calls, food, and transportation for participating students.
- Determine what tools and supplies are needed and have them ready prior to the project.
- Set specific tasks and goals to be accomplished during the planning process and on Make A Difference Day and communicate them to participants.
- Visit the project site(s) in advance to familiarize staff and students with the location.
- Use students to recruit other volunteers.
- Arrange speaking opportunities for students or staff at meetings of community organizations, employers, and other local groups that you've targeted to participate.
- Plan two projects — one that allows an opportunity to apply the specialized vocational skills students are learning in Job Corps, and a second project based on students' outside interests.

PARTNERING

- Establish a reciprocal relationship between individual agencies and specific dorms in advance of Make A Difference Day, on the day of the event, and as an ongoing commitment to the community.
- Get local community leaders involved.
- Ask Workforce Investment Boards and local One-Stop partners, such as local dislocated worker, vocational rehabilitation or apprenticeship programs, for project referrals and involvement.
- Involve your Community Relations Council and Center Industry Council members as volunteers.
- Survey the local community regarding community service needs. Ask community organizations how Job Corps can get involved.

- Consult with target agencies or those receiving services regarding particular needs to make sure you provide all that is needed.
- Develop relationships with trade-related service partners. Use work-based learning sites to maximize vocational training opportunities as part of community service.
- Get businesses to donate food and/or supplies as well as provide additional volunteers.
- Send thank-you letters to partners before the event. This reminder helps encourage participation.
- Create signs that list Job Corps' name along with partners' names and use them as backdrops in photos.
- Promote the project on Spanish-language media where appropriate.
- Look for partnership opportunities that can lead to future work-based learning sites.

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

- Have a media list updated and ready to use to promote your event.
- Invite media to get involved in the project.
- Create media advisories and press releases to let the press know about your event.
- Register your project using the DAYtaBANK at www.makeadifferenceday.com. This informs Make A Difference Day coordinators so they can help you to spread the word.

For detailed information on connecting with the media, go to <http://jcweb.jobcorps.org>.

APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION AND UNIQUE PROJECT IDEAS

- Plan one large project, and have an alternative project in case planning falls through or there is inclement weather.
- Arrange several projects from which students may choose.
- Make a project a two- or three-day event to maximize the number of people involved and results (try and make one of those days the official Make A Difference Day).
- Offer more projects to increase participation.
- Form volunteer groups according to dorm.
- Target students who might not otherwise play a role in center functions.
- Consider returning to last year's Make A Difference Day project site to continue your work.

- Plan activities that involve younger children so that Job Corps students can act as mentors.

DAY OF EVENT

- Get a motivational speaker to kick off the day.
- Put up banners and other visuals that “scream” Job Corps at activity/event site.
- Provide disposable cameras to participants to record activity. Remind them to get shots that include Job Corps banners, signs, shirts, etc.
- Bring Job Corps brochures and general information to promote your program.
- Talk up Job Corps among other volunteers and recipients of service. NETWORK.
- Make sure your key staff takes part, even if for just part of the day. Their presence makes student volunteers feel important and appreciated, and it speaks volumes about the value Job Corps places on community service.
- Remind volunteers of specific agreed-upon project tasks and goals at the beginning of the day.
- Have a staff member assigned to each project site.
- Engage those being helped by your service to participate.
- Dress appropriately for the work you will be doing, but make sure your students look professional and presentable. Have students wear matching Job Corps shirts if possible to reinforce our name and demonstrate our level of contribution.
- Arrange for Culinary Arts students to provide volunteers with coffee and refreshments. This allows community participants to see one of Job Corps’ trades in action and gives the Culinary Arts students a chance to shine.
- Clean up after your activity is completed.
- Have food and music at the end of the activity to celebrate accomplishments.

FOLLOW-UP

- Allow time for students to discuss and reflect on the activity they did and its impact on the community.
- Evaluate activities, participation, and logistics immediately after the event and record them for next year.
- Ask students to summarize in writing what they did and learned.
- Have students consider how volunteer service helped them practice each of the employability skills.
- Add service experience to students’ resumes and portfolios.
- Have students write thank-you notes to partners.
- Put together a scrapbook of photos and clippings from your event to display in the Center Director’s office or local One-Stop or volunteer center.

Attachment C

- Share a scrapbook with WIB, Industry Council, and Community Relations Council members at their next meeting.
- Follow up with partners and those you helped.
- Ask partners to issue personalized thank you letters to each student to include in their portfolios. Provide a sample.
- Promote results to the media and within the community after the fact.
- Continue or expand the partnership/project throughout the year.
- SUBMIT BEST PRACTICES FOR MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY 2005.