

# Service-Learning Update

Pennsylvania Service-Learning Alliance

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## Sewing Students and the Homeless Together with Service-Learning

-by Jessica Friedrichs,

PSLA Pittsburgh AmeriCorps\*VISTA

This holiday season students gather with family in homes all over Pennsylvania and celebrate their various traditions. Whether they celebrate Kwanzaa, Ramadan, Christmas, Diwali or Hanukah they experience the spirit of community and sharing. Often the holidays are times of giving to others through volunteering, making donations and gift giving. Service-learning projects during this season provide an opportunity for your students to volunteer as well as deepen their understanding of issues affecting their community. Service-learning curriculum stresses reflective and committed volunteerism as a tool for education, not simply as a once a year activity. The holidays are a time for students to give their services to make positive change in community by addressing issues that are troubling and downright ugly.

Enter, "Ugly Quilts for the Homeless", a volunteer project that any school or community group can sponsor. The idea for this project was created by Flo Wheatley of Hop Bottom, PA. Flo's idea for making sleeping bags out of old scraps of clothing and bedding has been reaching homeless people in a grassroots way for years. The quilts are called "ugly" because anyone can make them following Flo's simple design. Take up the "ugly" issue of homelessness with your students and run an Ugly Quilts program in your school or community center! Students can plan the clothing driving to gather scraps of material, organize the time, place, and volunteers needed for the 'quilting bee' and decide ways of distributing

the sleeping bags to homeless shelters and individuals in your community. Shelters may offer their facilities for making the quilts and may also want volunteers to spend time with the homeless in their programs. Find ways for your students to interact directly with homeless people. The Ugly Quilts website has more information on building this project:

[www.reese.org/sharon/uglyquilt.htm](http://www.reese.org/sharon/uglyquilt.htm).

Don't let the project start and stop there; use this experience to examine the crisis of homelessness in America and to build skills of your students in the process. What kinds of skills and standards can be met through an Ugly Quilts project? The sewing is an artistic craft that builds on family and consumer science. Math skills can be used to effectively calculate the numbers of volunteers, quilts and homeless people taking part in the project. Use English and writing skills when creating a persuasive publicity campaign to involve parents and community members. Also, use this as an opportunity to do some historical research on the homeless situation of the U.S., Pennsylvania and your local economy. Focus on the systemic reasons people are without homes and encourage your students to advocate for more affordable housing, higher wages, more support systems or other policy reforms. The National Alliance to End Homelessness has a comprehensive website with statistics and lesson plans for all grade levels: [www.naeh.org](http://www.naeh.org).

Finally, reflect with your students on the impact of providing Ugly Quilts in the homeless community near you. Some topics to think about include the importance of 'recycling' as one person's scraps can be another's warmth; gaining respect and empathy for homeless people by understanding how they came to be in that situation and questioning issues of justice and the role of legislation and government in the issue of homelessness. Let students share their personal experiences with homeless people while volunteering at a

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shelter or handing out the quilts on the streets. What stereotypes did they hold, and how were these changed through the project? Finally, let students develop ways to continue working on homelessness through other projects and connections to the homeless community. One woman created the idea of Ugly Quilts – just think what projects a whole classroom full of students can develop!

Celebrate the importance of community and generosity with your students this holiday season. Use service-learning as a tool for students to tackle a tough, 'ugly' issue and cultivate a deeper and more beautiful understanding through giving.

### **Student Run Service Centers: Helping Philadelphia School District Meet Service-Learning Requirements!**

**-by Dr. Cynthia Belliveau,  
PSLA Director**

Starting this school year, Philadelphia School District, is requiring students to have completed service-learning requirements before they graduate from 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. This is a major undertaking with the vast size of the Philadelphia School District. The nine Student Run Service Centers that are in the district represent one model for assisting with this initiative. These centers, funded by Corporation for National Service Learn and Serve funds, are hubs of service-learning activity, training, support and student empowerment. Centers are housed in Audenreid, Edison, Gratz, Overbrook, and University City and West Philadelphia high schools and Shawmont, Turner, and Grover Washington middle schools.

Though all the centers serve basic purposes of training and technical assistance, all are unique as the communities and students that they serve. The Center at West Philadelphia High School is concentrating on meeting the technology needs of the school and the community, with students refurbishing and

servicing computers. Turner Middle School students are focusing much of their efforts in reducing urban blight, with a wide range of community projects that are making a definite positive impact on their community. Shawmont Middle School emphasizes environmental needs and services and involves every student in the school. University City High School's center is working to address a wide range of environmental needs with a concentration on those affecting health, such as nutrition and lead poisoning.

Student Run Service Centers have the potential to truly empower young people to make a difference in their communities. They give students a place to go to find out information about service opportunities and give them the chance to serve as leaders in the operation of the center, which gives them valuable school-to-work skills. The centers also serve the teachers of a school, giving them a place to find assistance in developing service-learning projects in their classrooms. At the centers they can find a repository of community needs that need to be addressed, so that they can know what authentic needs exist in the community. Teachers can find service-learning information and examples that will help them to integrate their projects into their curriculum and standards. They also provide teachers with resources for service projects, so that teachers save time and resources by sharing supplies.

The centers also provide an open door to the community. Centers have found that once information about the centers gets out to the community, they have community members calling and offering to assist in projects, donate supplies and offer service opportunities and trainings. Community members express that the centers are welcoming places that truly show that schools and communities should work together to accomplish the goals that they both share – better communities and educated, empowered young people.

***For more information about Student Run Service Centers call Cynthia Belliveau, 215 573-6535 or send her an email: [bellivea@pobox.upenn.edu](mailto:bellivea@pobox.upenn.edu)***

## Service-Learning Tips and Ideas for Winter Projects

-by Cynthia Wetmiller,  
PSLA Assistant Director

### Environment

There is hardly anyone out there who likes ice storms. Ice storms are not only dangerous for those on the road and those on the sidewalks, ice storms are dangerous for the environment. Why? Because rock salt kills grass! And how about some of those chemicals that the public works trucks spray on the ice to promote melting? Do you think any of those chemicals are good for the environment? Well, why not challenge your science students to research these chemicals and determine what is safe and not safe for the environment? After the students research these issues they could create a brochure that highlights the safe and not so safe chemical remedies for melting that dangerous winter ice! Visit any of these websites for more information:

#### **Melting Ice Safely**

<http://www.agnr.umd.edu/ces/pubs/pdf/FS707.pdf>

#### **Water Pollution and Associated Effects from Street Salting**

<http://www.epa.gov/ednrmrl/repository/abstract1/abstract00.htm>

### Technology

Winter storms can be a lot of fun, but they can also be an inconvenience, especially for people who are addicted to their computer. With so many senior citizens going online and learning how to use computers, many of these seniors might overlook or never learn the importance of having a surge protector. A surge protector can mean life or death for your computer. Without one, a winter storm that brings a sudden loss of power could mean total devastation to computer equipment. A great service-learning project for Computer Science or Life Skills students would involve students researching various

surge protectors on the market and rating them according to price, quality and ease of use. These ratings could be compiled in the form of a brochure and students can recruit local community technology centers to pass out the brochures to seniors or anyone taking computer classes or maybe the students could even get the local Best Buy or CompUSA to partner on the project and distributed the information. For more information, visit any of these websites:

#### **Computers: Lesson 10 --From Kids Domain**

[http://www.kidsdomain.com/brain/computer/lesson/comp\\_les10.html](http://www.kidsdomain.com/brain/computer/lesson/comp_les10.html)

#### **Telecommunications Surge Protection**

<http://www.epanorama.net/links/surge.html#telecom>

#### **Frequently Asked Questions from SpikeMaster**

<http://www.spikemaster.net/faq.htm>

### Health

Snow shoveling can be a very difficult task if you are a senior citizen or if you suffer from a health condition such as a bad back or neck, heart condition or some form of physical disability. Health students could research various medical conditions that can worsen when a patient takes on a task such as snow shoveling. To take this project one step further, Physical Education students could organize a snow shoveling team that helps some of the community members during a snow storm, if they can't shovel their driveway or walkways. Visit any of these websites for more information:

#### **Shoveling Snow**

<http://www3.utsouthwestern.edu/library/consumer/snow2.htm>

#### **Blue Cross Cautions Snow Shovellers**

<http://www.diabetesnet.com/news/news011099.html>

## Training Events with the Staff of the Pennsylvania Service-Learning Alliance

The PSLA has a lot of great workshops planned for January and February (*opportunities to earn Act 48 hours*) in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Note the dates and register soon!

### Pittsburgh

To register for any of the workshops in Pittsburgh, go to:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~psla/PSLA/WesternPennsylvania.html>

If you have any questions about the workshops or events in Pittsburgh, contact the person listed with each event or call Cathy at (412) 648-1440.

#### Starting January 14th:

##### Act 48 Computer Workshops

Sponsored by the PSLA and Faith Tech, teachers can register to receive basic technology instruction and earn Act 48 hours in the process. From how to turn on the computer to tips on email and web searches, these basic computer classes will be very helpful for teachers with limited computer skills. Classes will be offered in Penn Hills and the North Side starting in January. To receive a schedule and registration materials, contact Cathy at (412) 648-1440.

#### Special Ed Workshop (Act 48):

**“Funding Service-Learning Projects: Where to Look and How to Look for \$”**

**Wednesday, January 23rd**

**10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

**University of Pittsburgh**

This workshop is for special education teachers who want to get service-learning going in their classroom but can't afford it. Learn about writing grants and looking for money in the community and on the web. There is no cost to attend this workshop and lunch will be provided. Four Act 48 hours will be given to teachers who attend the entire

workshop! Questions? Call Cyndi Wetmiller at (412) 648-1673.

#### Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup>:

**Let's Go to the Park!**

##### Rescheduled Workshop!

Well, we thought teachers might want to come to a Saturday workshop, but we were wrong. We're going to try again—this time on a Friday! Bob Hanke, Schenley Park Foreman, will help the PSLA facilitate this experiential workshop. Designed for K-6 teachers, this is the opportunity to learn more about how students can get involved with environmental projects in Schenley Park. If the weather allows, an outdoor hands-on activity will be incorporated into the workshop. Time: 9am – 3pm; Place: University of Pittsburgh/Schenley Park. Lunch is included and Act 48 hours will be given. **Deadline to register is January 21<sup>st</sup>! Call Sarah for more information: (412) 648-1481 or send her an email: [backstromscool@hotmail.com](mailto:backstromscool@hotmail.com)**

#### Special Ed

##### Network Meeting

**Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>**

**12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

**University of Pittsburgh**

A chance for special education teachers to come together and learn from each other about the many benefits of service-learning! Deadline to register is January 28<sup>th</sup>!

#### Upcoming Events in February:

**For information and details about these events visit the PSLA website in January:**

[www.pitt.edu/~psla](http://www.pitt.edu/~psla)

**February 8<sup>th</sup>: Recycling Workshop**

**February 18<sup>th</sup>: Community Gardens Presentation at the East End Food-Coop by PSLA VISTA Volunteers**

**February 22<sup>nd</sup>: Environmental Workshop with the EPA**

### Philadelphia

The January/February training calendar for the PSLA Philadelphia office is still in the process of being finalized. Keep an eye on the PSLA website's Eastern PA Workshop

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and Event section for postings about upcoming workshops:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~psla/PSLA/EasternPennsylvania.html>

### Pennsylvania Service-Learning Alliance Contact Information



To learn more about the efforts of the Pennsylvania Service-Learning Alliance, contact the offices of the PSLA in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia:

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