

## Service-Learning Project Sharing

A high quality example of a curriculum-based local or global outreach effort made possible by Learn and Serve Ohio, Partnerships Make a Difference, and a caring community of K-12 teachers and students

Learning with Purpose . . . Serving with Passion . . .  
**Creating a Positive Legacy**

### Project Title: *Build-A-Boat*

*“At St. James, we are changing the world; we just have to do it one village at a time!”*  
-- Yaw, St. James the Less Student

**Big Idea:** Our students answered a call for help from a Precious Blood Mission in India that serves a community devastated by the December 26, 2004, tsunami in the Indian Ocean. They built a boat, which restored a family’s income; built a daycare center; and revived a village’s sense of hope.

**Teachers:** Vicki Petrella and Colleen Gomez, St. James the Less School, Diocese of Columbus, Columbus, Ohio

**Students :** 36 8th graders from a diverse population

**Curriculum Area(s):** Language Arts, Communication Arts, Social Studies, Science, Music, Art, Religion

**Community Partner(s):** Precious Blood Priests

### Planning and Implementation Process

#### Investigation

*How/why did you choose to do this project? What significant need(s) or issue(s) did your students address? What made the idea for this project compelling/inspiring? How did you get them intellectually/emotionally engaged?*

Together with our students, we investigated ways in which, as a parish, we could help a Precious Blood Mission (which is an order of priests and nuns that staff a particular

parish) in another part of the world. We contacted our former assistant pastor, Fr. Angelo Anthony. He came and spoke to our students. He explained that a Precious Blood Mission in India needed help to restore a fishing village that had been affected by the 2004 Tsunami.

We knew the students wanted a tangible goal toward which to work, so we decided to earn money for a boat, fishing nets, and a motor. We found out that it would be possible to purchase all of these items for around \$3,000. The students were amazed by how much \$3,000 could buy in a developing country. This was a valuable lesson for our students about the disparity of wealth in the world.

### **Preparation**

*How did you and the students get ready? What learning was involved? What partnerships did you develop?*

We want students at St. James to appreciate the legacies of people who have "made a positive difference." Beyond this, we want the students themselves to make a positive difference and continuously create legacies of which they can be proud. Toward this end, we use the "Everyday Heroes" materials (© Partnerships Make a Difference) in our Religion curriculum for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades to help students identify positive role models in the world and in their own lives.

At the end of each year, our 6<sup>th</sup> grade students recognize their "Everyday Heroes" at our Service-Learning Awards Ceremony. This recognition helps initiate the 6<sup>th</sup> graders into service-learning and prepares them to take a more active role the following year. Building on the 6<sup>th</sup> graders' interest, we then implement a two-year model for service-learning that begins with students' exploration of a given project and related issues during their 7<sup>th</sup> grade year and continues with fundraising and other positive action during their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.

For the "Build-A-Boat" project, our 7<sup>th</sup> graders did a great deal of research. During Communication Arts class, they learned about tsunamis, relief organizations, India, weather alert systems, and the Precious Blood Order. In Social Studies, each student completed a project about a country in the area affected by the tsunami, for which they examined damage reports and relief efforts in each of the countries.

We made a connection through email and postal mail with the Precious Blood priest who was servicing a refugee camp for the people from a fishing village in the southeast corner of India. After the research, the students had a better understanding of the issues facing the tsunami survivors and were excited that they could help.

The teachers decided a good way to initiate the service-learning project was to choose a school theme for the year that would support the Build-A-Boat project. The theme "Set Sail with St. James" was chosen and provided the larger framework for the project and

related activities.

### **Action**

*Service-learning allows students the chance to change the world—sometimes in small ways, sometimes in much larger ways. Please explain the meaningful service activities in which you and your students were involved.*

In 2005, the outgoing 8<sup>th</sup> grade class wanted to leave a parting gift to contribute towards the Build-A-Boat project. They took a collection after their Lenten performance for the parish, and these donations served as our seed money for this project. This set a wonderful precedent for all future projects, and our students have made the collection a tradition for the last five years. The collection has allowed the 8<sup>th</sup> graders to “pay it forward.” The 7<sup>th</sup> graders also wanted to contribute, so they organized a bake sale for the family picnic on the last day of school.

At the beginning of the Build-A-Boat project, students, teachers, and parents brainstormed fundraising projects. Our big events included the annual OSU/Michigan Submarine Sandwich Sale and a pancake breakfast. Parents took the initiative to help with our fundraising efforts by volunteering their time for our activities and events.

Eighth grade students continued the research they had started as 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Using print sources and the Internet, they learned about tsunamis, which countries were affected in 2004, and what other countries did to help with relief. They also researched Red Cross efforts and Precious Blood Missions around the world.

Throughout their fundraising efforts, students worked together using spreadsheets to keep track of sandwich orders, and to make invitations for presentations to the whole school using the program *Publisher*. They also made presentations for the celebration at the end. Our original goal was to raise \$3,000, but with the proceeds from our fundraising and donations, we earned \$3,700.

Our students were able to realize that they could make a difference from the other side of the world by taking small actions in big ways. Mr. Kulthouse, the recipient of our money from Build-A-Boat, wrote to the children and said, “In January of 2004, I lost my oldest son in a fishing accident. He drowned in the water before my eyes. In December of that year, the tsunami took everything else from me, including my wife. My remaining son and I waited in the refugee camp for relief. Your boat has given me my life and my livelihood back. There will not be a day of my life when I will not say a prayer for the children of St. James the Less.”

Attached to his letter was a picture of the boat with our school’s name on it. As an added surprise, we also received pictures of a daycare center. There was enough money left over from our contribution to provide this for the children of the area.

## **Reflection**

*Written, oral, artistic, visual, dramatic and other forms of expression... all these are important ways of reflecting. In what ways did your students reflect on their experiences and the learning that was a part of it? What were a few of their key observations and insights?*

Students reviewed the "Everyday Heroes" materials, which helped them think about legacy, role models, the gifts they have, and the gifts they see in people around them. They reflected about their own role models, and we tied this in with our study of saints before students received the sacrament of Confirmation. Students studied the work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and how her efforts impacted so many. They discussed and read her speech about being a "pencil in the hand of God." Students then wrote essays that tied all of this together and explained how their service-learning work helped them make a difference. As a group, they wrote a song entitled "I Am a Pencil in the Hand of God," and it has become an integral part of all our service-learning celebrations.

Students also reflected in journal format on what service-learning meant to them. Chris wrote, "Other 8<sup>th</sup> graders in neighboring schools raised money to pay for a school trip to Washington D.C., while we raised money to help someone around the world by being global citizens." Heather said, "Service at St. James is different from other schools because we understood the problem and fundraised to address the need. We didn't just collect money for a cause."

## **Demonstration/Celebration**

*Along the way and at the end of the project, how did you celebrate the impact of your efforts? In what ways did students demonstrate their new learning?*

We were fortunate to have great publicity for this project. The Precious Blood Priests sent a journalist from their publication, *CPPS Today*, to interview the students and learn about our efforts. *The Catholic Times* also came to do a story about our project. The students shared their efforts and helped the journalists gather information for the articles. Alexandra F. said, "We get to do projects that let us show our creativity. We do our own thing while we are still learning."

Through Jean Giesige, the *CPPS Today* reporter, we learned that Fr. Angelo, who first planted the seed for the fishing boat project, said, "It is inspiring to watch them learn. It is exciting to see the missionary spirit that is being formed in the minds and hearts of the students at this school. We are all called to be brothers and sisters, and that truth is being shared in a very tangible way at this school."

Our students created a PowerPoint presentation as a summary of their project. They invited family and friends to celebrate at a party where they displayed pictures from the fundraising events that led to our success. They also built in time to thank some of our

special donors and supporters. They created many displays of reflections and research projects and debuted the song that they had written as a class, which one of our 8<sup>th</sup> graders, Kim S., had put to music. Our students' success story was shared with enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment and inspired other students and parents to become excited about future service-learning projects.

### **Assessment/Evaluation**

*To validate service-learning and spotlight key results, we need to gather information about student learning and attitude changes, as well as the impact on local/global needs and issues. What are some ways in which you were able to document your students' progress and the impact of their efforts?*

In language arts, students conducted research and wrote formal research papers about the global issues related to this project. In social studies, they were assessed on their knowledge of geography and world regions. By analyzing a United Nations report, they also demonstrated their understanding of the problems caused by the tsunami, and what those in the region who were not directly affected were doing to help their neighbors.

### **Curriculum Connections**

*High quality service-learning connects service with the curriculum. A variety of state and local standards can be addressed through the investigation, preparation, action, reflection and celebration/demonstration/evaluation phases of service-learning.*

*So . . . how did your students use their academic knowledge and skills to "make a difference?" How did they become scientists, writers, artists, researchers, etc. to support this project? What curricular areas were addressed through this project? What were some specific standards or learning objectives that were covered? What kinds of interdisciplinary planning and learning occurred?*

**Social Studies:** regions of the world, latitude and longitude, international issues (such as distribution of economic activities), landforms, climate, seismic activity, identifying information from primary and secondary sources

**Religion:** mission of service for the church, development of the Christian person's call to dignity, relationship, and service

**Communication Arts:** comprehension skills, writing process, utilizing a variety of print and non-print text for multiple purposes, writing informational essays or reports, using technology to summarize and present information.

**Math:** currency, data analysis, problem solving strategies

**Science:** physical science, weather, earthquakes, tsunamis

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

*There is an increasing emphasis on helping students develop and demonstrate 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (Ken Kaye et. al.) Service-learning provides an excellent way to incorporate these skills in an authentic way. Please check the themes and skills that were addressed in your project.*

- ☒ Global Awareness
- ☒ Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy
- ☒ Civic Literacy
- ☒ Health Literacy
- ☒ Creativity and Innovation
- ☒ Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- ☒ Communication and Collaboration
- ☒ Information Literacy
- ☒ Media Literacy
- ☒ ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy
- ☒ Flexibility and Adaptability
- ☒ Initiative and Self-Direction
- ☒ Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- ☒ Productivity and Accountability
- ☒ Leadership and Responsibility

*Please provide at least one specific example or anecdote of how one of the skills was evident in your students' work.*

#### **Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy and Leadership and Responsibility**

Our students realized that they were leaders by taking on responsibilities for learning and fundraising. They used their many individual gifts to make the project successful. They realized and appreciated each other's strengths and talents. This built real community within the class and the parish. The project allowed them to feel valued. They were each able to make a big difference in their own way.

#### **Impact: Kids Using Their "Best Stuff" To Make A Difference**

*Curricular skills/knowledge and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are certainly part of students' "best stuff." In addition... how did your students use their individual gifts, passions and strength of character in carrying out this project?*

They used their gifts of writing, composing, singing, and technological expertise. They used their talents of persuasion to sell and their artistic abilities to draw advertisements.

They used their speaking talents to present information. Each one shared the responsibility of fundraising by making and selling baked goods and submarine sandwiches.

*Do you think your students felt empowered by this project? What “voice” and leadership roles did they have? How did they “take charge” of certain aspects of the project?*

Yes, our students felt empowered. The pictures of the boat and daycare along with Mr. Kulthouse’s letter made a huge impact on the children. There was no doubt in anyone’s mind that we had made a difference. These students set the standards for service-learning at St. James. They left big shoes for future classes to fill.

*In what ways did they develop a deeper appreciation/understanding of other viewpoints, perspectives, circumstances and/or backgrounds.*

Service-learning helped them have a better understanding of problems around the world and allowed them to take ownership for finding a solution that they could accomplish.

*How did they experience and demonstrate a stronger sense of community (within the classroom, locally and/or globally) and/or civic engagement?*

The students educated the parish community when they requested its support. They also felt a close connection to the people of the fishing village in India. They had a better appreciation for the Precious Blood priests who serve our parish and those who serve around the world.

*What aspects of the project made your students especially proud?*

Our students were proud that they raised enough money to change many lives with simple actions. They also felt valued when they read the letter from the man who received the boat we bought. They were especially proud that the Dominican Sisters used the surplus to build a steel-framed daycare center for children who had lost a parent in the tsunami.

*From the students’ perspectives, what difference did their efforts make?*

They knew and believed that they gave people across the world hope and a brighter future.

*Are there any ways you haven’t yet mentioned in which the project benefited your students? Your school? The community/world and those you were trying to help?*

Our project has been an inspiration to those who have heard our success story. It set the

bar for future service-learning at St. James. It made our parish aware of the great things our kids were doing at the school. Without our help, this man and his family would still be struggling to make a living and to shake off his depression from losing his wife, son, and livelihood. As an added bonus by providing money for the new daycare center, we were able to help children have a safe place to stay while their single parents worked to make a better life for them, instead of roaming the streets without supervision.

### **And Now, Some Numbers . . .**

*Please estimate the time spent on your project:*

Number of Project-Related Hours per Student: 50  
Number of Students: 36  
Total Estimated Service and Learning Hours: 1,800  
Money Raised: \$3,700

### **Other Insights/Your Own Reflections**

*Can you describe one or more of the “magic” or “aha” moments that happened as part of this experience?*

“It excited me and allowed me to change up my teaching and explore another creative outlet.” -- Colleen Gomez.

“I can’t describe how incredible it was when I read Mr. Kulthouse’s letter and saw the pictures. It made such an impact on the students when we shared it with them. This really was an example to all of our students about how service-learning can be so successful.” -- Vicki Petrella.

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