

YOUTHWORKS

Service Resources



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HOW TO FIND SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

As you set up service opportunities for your youth group, it could be easy to feel overwhelmed. Don't be discouraged! Consider the following steps to help you find great service organizations that can utilize your students in meaningful ways.

1. **Use a Volunteer Database.** There are many databases that can be incredibly helpful to find service opportunities. You can make your search specific to your location and adjust the search filters based on the service you'd like to do. Be aware that not every service organization accepts teenage volunteers, so be sure to include that in your search parameters.
 - United Way (getconnected.unitedwayhelps.org/need/)
 - Volunteer Match (volunteermatch.org)
 - Idealist (idealist.org)
 - All for Good (allforgood.org)
2. **Look it up on Google.** If you are looking for a specific type of service experience for your students, simply look it up on Google. For example, if you wanted to search for service opportunities at a food shelf, you could google something like "food banks in St. Louis".
3. **Ask Around.** Talk to people at your church, friends or neighbors for recommendations. People may have personal connections to small ministries or non-profits that need extra volunteer help- places that wouldn't necessarily come up on a Google search.
4. **Look to Diversify your Existing Service Schedule.** Consider your existing service schedule. Does it have more relational or tangible service opportunities? Look for new service opportunities that will give different types of service opportunities for students.
5. **Don't Forget About Relational Service.** Many organizations need volunteers simply to spend time visiting with residents/clients. Great places to look for service opportunities are adult day centers or children's programs. These facilities typically welcome teenage volunteer groups.
6. **Get in Touch.** Once you have found an organization that you think may work, call the contact listed on the website, ask to speak to a volunteer coordinator.
 - Phone calls are usually better and will save time versus emailing. Typically, when you are looking for a new service opportunity it is best to have this taken care of immediately and phone calls will help with this efficiency.

Community Specific Tips to Find Service Opportunities:

1. **If in a Small Town** – Contact the local Chamber of Commerce and ask for a list of all social service organizations. Likely, there are not that many, so feel free to contact all of them.
2. **If in/near a Native American Reservation Community** – Contact the local Tribal Housing Authority and the local Tribal Government office. They may have volunteer opportunities.
3. **If in a Small Urban/Suburban Area**– Connect with other churches in your area to see which organizations they support.
4. **If in a Large Urban Area**– Use Google or any other volunteer database search.

CALL SCRIPT FOR FINDING SERVICE

Organization Name: _____

Call Date: _____

Name of Person Spoken With: _____

1. Introduce yourself and why you are calling.
 - *Example: "Hello, my name is Jenny and I am looking for a volunteer opportunity for a group, may I speak with your volunteer coordinator?"*

2. When you have the right person on the phone, explain a little about who your church/youth group is and what we do in the community.
 - *Example: "I work with First Lutheran Church here in St. Louis. This summer I am planning a week of service in St. Louis with our teenagers. During this week, we hope to volunteer at local nonprofit agencies between the hours of 9-3, Monday-Thursday, on [these] dates. Do you have capacity to take on volunteers for some or all of this time?"*

3. If they seem interested in volunteers, talk about your schedule and how that organization would fit in your plans. Also, ask the following questions:
 - What type of work would my students do?
 - Do you have a minimum age requirement for volunteers?
 - What is the maximum number of volunteers you can take?
 - Do you require a background check for adult volunteers?
 - Does your agency require special paperwork or release forms for volunteers that need to be signed by a parent/guardian?

4. If the service partner seems interested and you think it would work on your end too, see if they have additional time to talk (if not, schedule a call or meeting later) and ask these questions/ get the following information:
 - Nail down the exact dates and times for volunteer shifts
 - Ask for more information about what the organization does and who they serve
 - Find out specifically what students will do there
 - Learn the name of the go-to person and their contact information. Will this person be available when the students come to serve?
 - Does it work for students to bring a lunch and take a break to eat? Is there a good place for them to do this?
 - Do you have any information about your organization's COVID safety plans that needs to be communicated to the students? What can we do to keep both students and clients safe while volunteering?
 - Do you have any specific dress code requirements?



Service Orientation Outline

Follow this template to give a thorough service orientation to your students.

Overview of the organization(s) they will be serving:

(What makes this organization important to the community?)

Logistics about the organization(s) and their schedule for the day:

(How will they get around? What should they know that's unique about the logistics of this organization?)

Help them understand their role at the organization.

(What will they be doing? How is what they're doing today helping the community?)

Be honest and upfront.

(What will be hard? What will be helpful?)

Get them excited by casting vision about what they will be doing:

(Why should they care? Share a personal story if you can.)

Share any other information you think is important

(Safety reminders, three-together rule, etc.)

Check that everyone is dressed appropriately and has a nametag.

(Keep in mind any organization-specific dress code rules.)

And before you send them off, PRAY FOR THEIR DAY!

Service Orientation Example

This is what your service orientation should sound like.

Overview of the organization(s) they will be serving: *(What makes this organization important to the community?)*

Loaves and Fishes Farm. Loaves and Fishes serves meals at various dining centers across Minnesota. They are the largest open to the public free meal program in Minnesota – in 2019 they served over 1 million meals! They partner with local schools and organizations to rescue food that may otherwise go to waste, and much of their fresh produce is grown at farms and gardens around the Twin Cities. The farm at Peace Lutheran Church where you will be working today, was created just a few years ago, and the food that is harvested here is then used to make meals at Loaves and Fishes' dining sites throughout Minnesota. So far this year, this farm has provided 11 thousand pounds of produce which have been used for 80 thousand meals.

Logistics about the organization(s) and their schedule for the day: *(What will they do? What should they know that's unique about the logistics of this organization?)*

Today, you will be helping with some cleanup projects on the farm. Many of the beds are covered in plastic to help keep out weeds and retain moisture, and at this time of year that plastic needs to be pulled out and rolled up. There are some tomato trellises that need to be taken down too. Additionally, we'll be harvesting a few different crops – likely leeks, carrots, beets, and lettuce. These are essential elements of the process of getting the food to the hands that most need it. Kimberly, the Farm Manager will meet you when you arrive to give you more specific instructions.

Help them understand their role at the organization. *(How is what they're doing today helping the community?)*

This farm is almost entirely run by volunteers, so without folks like you, they couldn't do what they do! As you work in the gardens and harvest the crops today, you can think about all the people who will see this fresh produce on their plate at a Loaves and Fishes meal!

Be honest and upfront. *(What will be hard? What will be helpful?)*

Today, we won't be directly interacting with the community. The work you do may be hot and you might get dirty. However, your service will directly impact people in this community in need of a meal. Often, lower income individuals have easy access to unhealthy food, but fresh, homegrown produce like the food we'll harvest at the farm is more expensive and harder to come by. Your work in harvesting this food will give a healthy meal option to people in this community.

Get them excited by casting vision about what they will be doing: *(Why should they care? Share a personal story if you can.)*

The Loaves and Fishes website shares some testimonials about guests who eat at the community meals. As you're out there working at the farm, think of the people receiving this food. People like...

Steve. Steve drove for a taxi company after serving during the Vietnam War, and recently retired. He comes to Loaves and Fishes to stretch his retirement dollars and to ensure that he is getting a nutritious meal to help with his PTSD, hypertension and diabetes.

Think of people like Jenny. Jenny began dining with Loaves and Fishes after being diagnosed with a pancreatic neuroendocrine tumor that had metastasized to her liver. Her weight had dropped significantly. The nutritious meals helped her gain weight back while also stretching her household income, which was compromised by unexpected medical bills.

Share any other information you think is important: *(Safety reminders, three-together rule, etc.)*

Lunch can be eaten outside if the weather is nice, and/or inside the church.

Bathrooms are inside the church, and at the Burger King and gas station across the street from the farm (using the church is the first choice for bathrooms). Travel in groups of 3 or more, and make sure to look both ways before crossing the street.

Check that everyone is dressed appropriately and has a nametag. *(Keep in mind any organization-specific dress code rules.)*

Be sure to wear layers and clothes you don't mind getting dirty. Closed-toed shoes are required. Gloves will be provided when you get there.

Share any relevant information for the Adult Leaders and Drivers. *(Share any relevant details about driving, parking, how to check in, etc.)*

Adults, you can find the address for the farm in your Adult Leader Binder. This address will bring you to Peace Lutheran Church. You can park in the lot to the back – you'll pass a playground on your left and see a small gravel path on your right. Walk down that path to meet Kimberly.

And before you send them off, PRAY FOR THEIR DAY!