

# Service Projects 101

## MSU Residence Life

### Step One: USE YOUR RESOURCES...don't re-invent the wheel!

- Attend the [Into the Streets Community Involvement Fair](#) to connect in person with non-profits
- Office for Community Involvement (OCI) Agency lists in print and their website
- OCI website posts volunteer opportunities on its homepage
- Work with the staff in OCI, one-on-one to help you find a terrific project with a strong organization
- Log-on to [Volunteer Connections](#), a website that agencies can post their volunteer opportunities on
- [Service Saturdays](#), once a month service projects organized by the OCI
- Formally or informally survey your residents for interest in a service project and background/experience in service or with certain organizations. See example survey on OCI website. This will be useful so you don't organize a service project that no one is interested in!

### Step Two: MAKE CONTACT – START RESEARCHING / EXPLORING OPTIONS

- Call agency contacts with either specific project interests or call with a general inquiry about any needs they may have for groups to assist them.
- Start a CONTACTS notebook, folder, or binder and always note whom you have spoken with, when, at what number or email address, and write a brief outline of what was discussed and what next step(s) were agreed upon or suggested.
- Be clear in your communication and realistic in your goals on numbers of residents who might participate...don't commit beyond your means.
- Stay in touch with contacts who are interested in working with your residents until the project happens or until it is clear it will not work out.
- Always end the communications on a positive note even if it is a call to say it will not work out for you and your residents.

### Step Three: WORK WITH OTHER RESIDENCE HALL STAFF (RD/ARD) TO MOVE FORWARD AND FINALIZE PROJECT IDEAS

- Keep those who are there to advise and support you informed on your progress and seek their ideas and input along the way.

### Step Four: MAKE THE COMMITMENT – GET ALL THE DETAILS

- Pull your residents together and gauge their interest and eagerness to participate in the project you are preparing to commit to.
- Communicate the commitment to your contact in the community with a conservative number of likely volunteers.

- Ask for details like: day, time, supplies you need to bring, clothes the group should wear, and specific tasks the group will perform.
- Establish with the contact if they have a cap on the number of people they can work with on that day as this will help you set goals for your recruitment.
- Feel free to negotiate terms and details with your contact as needed.
- Ask who will be there to meet the group and get their name and a telephone number for use in case of any emergency.
- Ask if the person who meets you there will also be supervising you and will be around for the duration of your service work.
- Make sure you know where you will be serving and ask for detailed directions if needed.
- Tell your contact that the group will be very interested in learning a little about the organization, its mission, goals and who it serves and how. Let them know it will be very helpful if the person who supervises the group in their work can provide a context for that work within the larger scheme of the organization before the group begins working.
- Agree to be back in touch as the date gets closer to cover any last minute details and confirm numbers, and meeting times.

Step Five: **RECRUIT YOUR RESIDENTS TO PARTICIPATE**

- Create a flyer or poster about the project with pertinent information (who, what, when, where, why) and make it fun and appealing. Display it prominently on your door.
- Announce the details at a floor meeting (give yourself at least three weeks to recruit) and pass around a sign-up sheet asking for names, room #'s, phone #'s and whether they have transportation to get themselves to the work site. (Only have enough lines on the sign-up sheet as the site can manage in volunteers.) Let your residents know that the sign-up sheet represents a commitment to the project.
- Post the sign-up sheet on your door and encourage residents to try to rearrange work schedules and other commitments so that they can participate – they can sign up on the sheet on your door right up to the day before the event.
- Announce that anyone who does not have transportation will need to make their own arrangements with someone on the sign-up sheet that does have transportation. You may be a transportation option for someone, but don't participate in a process of finding rides for others for liability reasons.
- Develop a map to the work site that has the date, time, name of organization, and any specifics like recommended clothes to wear etc.
- Distribute the maps to those who sign up to participate a few days before the event and reconfirm their participation and let them know how happy you are that they are coming along to help.
- Encourage your residents to invite friends from other floors or halls to participate, especially if sign-ups are moving slowly.

- Personally invite your RD/ARD to join you and give them as much notice as possible to try and fit it into their schedules – you never know, they may be able to make it!

**Step Six: FINALIZE AND CONFIRM**

- Be in touch with your agency contact 2 days prior to the event to confirm all details including day, time to be at the site, location, supplies, recommended clothing, tasks to be performed, name of supervisor who will oversee, and provide them with the #'s of volunteers coming to that point in your recruitment.
- Contact all volunteers the day before the event to reconfirm project details with participants and let them know how much the organization is counting on all of them to be there and ready to work. Thank them for participating!

**Step Seven: LEAD THE GROUP BY EXAMPLE**

- Attitude is everything! Be up and eager and welcoming as the group members arrive at the site on the day of the project.
- Introduce yourself to the supervisor as soon as possible – don't wait for the entire group to be there and keep the supervisor informed on how many are still coming.
- Have your sign-up sheet with you and keep track of who is there and who is missing. Call the missing volunteers/stragglers to find out where they are.
- Keep a good attitude – no matter what!
- Once everyone is there or at least most of the group, don't hold up the project any longer. Let the supervisor know you are ready to get started and that you will catch any late comers up when they arrive.
- When the supervisor has the group gathered for the orientation to the organization, add at the end of their presentation that you'd like the group to have a brief dialogue after the project work is done so please don't all take off immediately.
- Be prepared to ask the supervisor for what your group needs: information on the organization's mission, goals, a sense of the layout of the facility, location of bathrooms etc. if this is not provided.
- Be prepared to ask how the work your group is about to engage in fits with the goals or mission of the organization. How will this work benefit the organization or the clients they serve? CONTEXT!
- Be observant throughout the project and advocate for your volunteers. If someone is struggling with a task or a tool, ask them if they'd like help from another volunteer or ask if they'd like to take on another task. Keep the supervisor informed if volunteers are having trouble and contribute ideas to solve problems and meet challenges.
- Be supportive, encouraging, positive, and always keep a sense of humor!
- Watch the time and check in with the supervisor in the last 30 minutes of your commitment to arrange clean up and have a little time for the supervisor to talk to the group again if they'd like and allow time for a reflective dialogue!

**Step Eight: REFLECTION**

- Thank your host for the opportunity to be of assistance.
- Gather the group outside or in an open area of the facility to have a brief reflective discussion about the service project.
- Utilize the Office for Community Involvement's website for useful reflection cues and ideas.
- Remember to thank your volunteers for their time and contributions to this project and this organization. Let them know you enjoyed spending time working side by side with them!

This is a general outline for organizing your own service event. If you would like further assistance or guidance, please feel free to contact MSU's Office for Community Involvement (OCI) any time. We would welcome the opportunity to help make your service project a success! Please keep in mind that the OCI has many service events throughout the year that you and your residents can participate in.

994-6902

[www.montana.edu/community](http://www.montana.edu/community) (we have a section just for Residence Life!)

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\*If you have suggestions for changes to this document, please forward them to Mandy at the email address listed above.

