

WHY

SERVICE LEARNING



Our studies demonstrate that if you engage in helping activities as a teen, you will still be reaping health benefits 60-70 years later. And no matter when you adopt a giving lifestyle, your well-being will improve. Generous behavior is closely associated with reduced risk of illness and mortality and lower rates of depression. Even more remarkable, giving is linked to traits such as social competence, empathy and positive emotion that undergird a successful life.

**Stephen Post and Jill Neimark in
“Why Good Things Happen to Good People”**

Service-learning can provide young people with experiences that are eye-opening, challenging and satisfying. It allows them to see the influence and impact that each individual can have on their community and, ultimately, it empowers them to use that influence toward the creation of a better, more humane world for all. To engage in service-learning is to directly address human rights in your community and the world.

To quote Cathryn Berger-Kaye, an international service learning consultant:

Well-designed and implemented service-learning works for kids, students, teachers, parents, and communities. It infuses relevance, skill development, and concept knowledge across multiple curricular areas. And service-learning develops intrinsic knowledge rather than relying on extrinsic rewards, prizes, or competition.

What is exciting is how the service-learning experience can vary depending on student interests, subject matter, and community need – it’s continually fresh and purposeful. Whether students are visiting people with Alzheimer’s, restoring wetlands, developing a city bicycle policy, or writing children’s books for parents, service-learning lets them become engaged citizens.”

You may ask, “Why go global?” The world is becoming a much smaller place due to technology, business and political connections. A global project provides the opportunity for students to:

- Enhance critical thinking to stretch beyond local community
- Connect with people and issues around the world that take on a relevancy because of the development of relationships
- Develop a global view of the world to become a more educated, engaged global citizen
- Recognize our interdependence as nations in a global society

Serving others is not just a form of “do-goodism”, it is a road to social responsibility and citizenship. It is an ideal setting for bridging the gap between the classroom and the street. Service-learning enables learners to apply the academic skills and knowledge they learn in the classroom to real world situations. Service-learning projects require the use of research, analytical and writing skills, organizational and leadership skills, and artistic expression.

“Imagine,” in John Lennon’s immortal words, “all people living a life in peace.” Then begin through incremental changes to make that dream a reality. THIS is the foundation of human rights service-learning.

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H2O For Life Toolkit