



TNT

SERVICE LEARNING GUIDE FOR YOUTH
MINISTRY

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Service Learning in Youth Ministry

Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. Matthew 5:16 (Life Application Study Bible, NIV, 2004)

In order to more deeply understand service learning, this section provides youth leaders a comprehensive definition of service learning and role it can play in youth ministry.

Service Learning

What is service learning? “The National Community Service Act of 1990 defined service learning as a process whereby youth learn and develop through active participation in organized service experiences that actually meet community needs” (as cited by Champion, 1999, ¶6). The benefits to youth participating in service learning come from the experiential nature of community projects (Champion 1999; Weah, Simmons, & Hall, 2000). Service learning provides youth a forum to practice multiple skills that they are learning from school, youth groups and other experiences. Additionally, author Burns (1998) states that service learning “helps foster a sense of caring” (as cited in Champion, 1999, ¶6). In James 2: 14 it says, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?” and in James 2: 17 “In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” Therefore,

service becomes an opportunity for youth to both develop and live out their faith.

The research done by Weah, Simmons, & Hall, (2000) found that youth participate in service learning because they “feel personal satisfaction” and want “to improve their community, and to improve society as a whole” (p. 673). These findings are consistent with the research done by Howard (1993) and Woehrle (1993), who emphasize the personal growth youth experience as they gain a deeper understanding of the diverse needs within their own community and experience the positive feelings of serving others (pp. 42-43). Woehrle (1993) writes “Students come to realize that they, the servers, benefit as much as or more than those they are serving” (p. 42).

The benefits of service learning for youth are in four key areas: an increase of self-esteem; a sense of empowerment by participating in community service where they are needed, valued, and respected; improved citizenship as a result of active engagement in community life; and a heightening the student's desire to learn through their experience (Champion, 1999, ¶17-18). Additionally, service learning promoted: a heightened sense of personal and social responsibility; more positive attitudes towards adults; more active exploration of careers; enhanced self-esteem; growth in moral ego development; more complex pattern of thoughts; and greater mastery of skills and content (Champion, 1993, ¶ 17). Therefore, the benefits to youth participation in service learning opens the

door for advanced learning, leadership development, and an increased awareness of self and others.

This increased awareness of self and others plays a significant role in faith formation. God can be experienced in three ways: Mind, Heart and Hands. The mind experience is our conceptualization of our faith. The Heart is the relational experience of God, while the Hands is experiencing God through service. All three are important to how we experience God and can be entered from one path, service. Service learning is the opportunity for youth to learn and think more deeply about social issues, to experience doing for others, and learning from real life experience in community development. Emily Miller, a youth at St. Aidan's United Church reported the following about being part of a service learning project, a mural in the community, with her youth group:

My experience while working on the mural was one of great community building, not just with the other workers, but also with the people in the community around us. Many people showed interest in our project, stopped to ask questions and watch us work, and many were eager to see the finished product. The nice thing about mural is that you can really see the difference it will make even before you have finished the project. I am very proud of our finished mural and I like to show it off whenever I get the chance, it is wonderful to know that thanks to us a little piece of Victoria has been made more beautiful. To top it all off I would like to finish

by saying that the mural project is really just a fun way of making friends and doing something great for your community.

This guide is intended to give youth leaders both inspiration and practical steps to coordinating a service learning project. It is important to not be deterred by misconceptions about youth. Two myths impacting youth in service learning are that “Young people lack the motivation to become involved” and “Young people lack the skills needed to handle the “serious” issues of power and politics or make significant differences through their work” (Tolman & Pittman, 2001, pp. 7-8). In fact, research finds that “this generation is not seeking to distance itself from community, but is instead looking for new and distinctive ways to connect to the people and issues surrounding them” (Tolman & Pittman, 2001, p. 7). A survey done in 1998 by Princeton Survey Research Associates for Do Something (as cited by Tolman & Pittman, 2001) found 73% of young people ages 15-29 believe that they can have a big or moderate impact on making their community a better place to live (p. 8). This survey also suggested that youth perceive their participation in community change “as more authentic and rewarding than do adults” (p. 9). Based upon this data it is important for youth leaders to create opportunities for youth to break the myths that limit their participation and contributions to the community.

Based upon the research there are various models for youth and adults to approach community change through service learning. This guide offers a four-

step approach based upon the best practices within the field, in addition to suggestions for effective youth and adult collaboration. This guide also provides a model of a service learning project in Victoria, British Columbia, the Community Mural Project. Information and resources are provided for youth leaders who wish to do a mural in their community.

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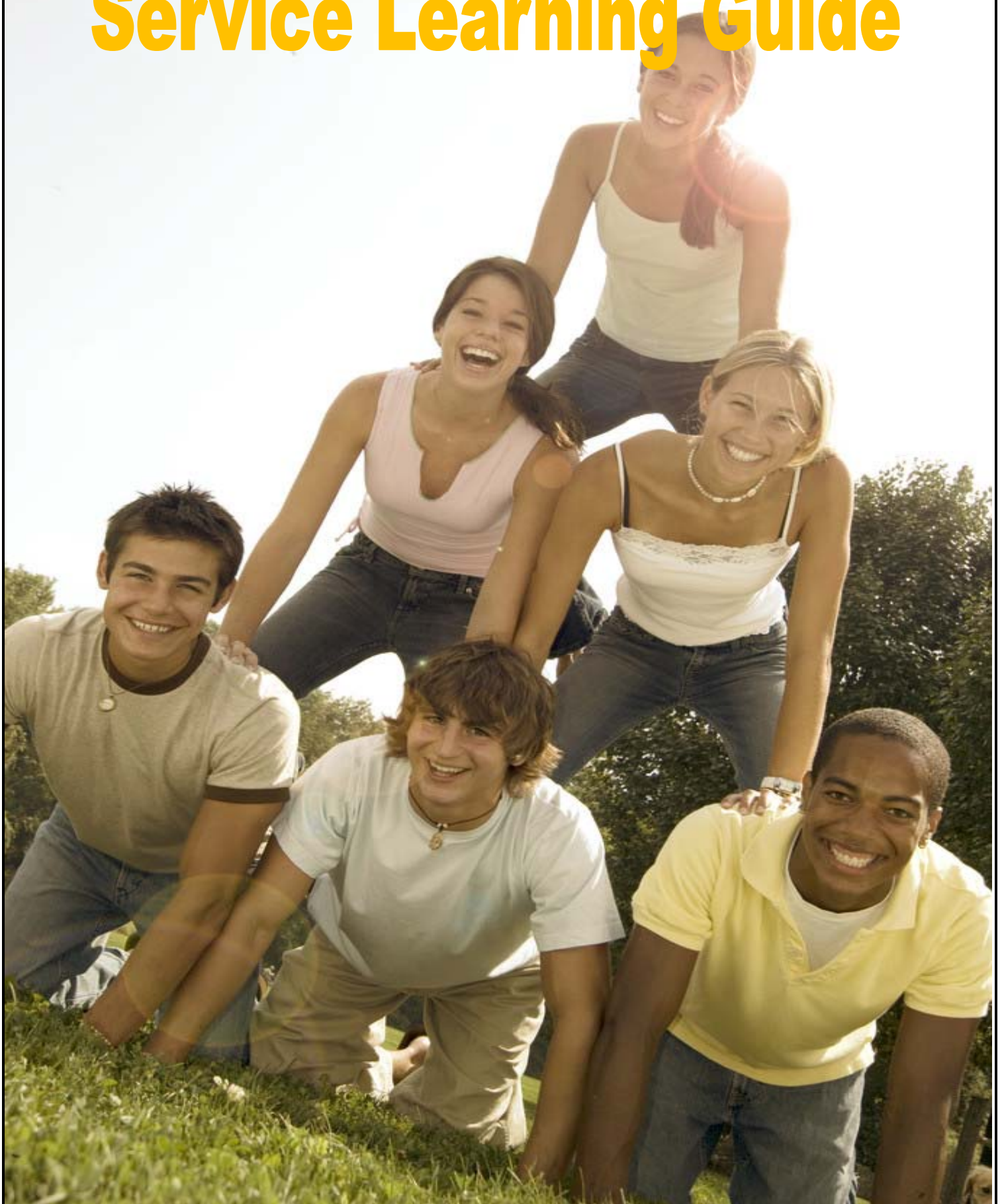
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Service Learning Guide



Best Practices in Service Learning: A Four-step Approach

Service learning is defined as youth engaged in community service, civic engagement and social activism for the purpose of learning

This guide offers best practices in service learning, with a four-step approach to developing youth-driven sustainable community based projects in your ministry. Based upon best practices from educators and experts in service learning this approach has been designed to help youth leaders support youth in developing sustainable community projects.

Step 1: Building the Relationship

- Identify the partnering organization
- Meet with the appropriate stakeholders to determine their needs
- Build and develop a reciprocal relationship

To establish a sustainable partnership with a community organization it is important for youth to develop a relationship with its stakeholders in the early developmental phases of a project.

The youth alone cannot determine the needs of the community they want to serve. The project must not only be an opportunity for the youth but also meet a need in the community. It is critical to empowering everyone involved that the partnering organization is involved in assessing their needs to determine the goals of the project.



The needs assessment creates a base and target for action. All Stakeholders should be involved in the assessment process which could include techniques such as asset mapping, focus group, survey or interviews.

A project that excludes the stakeholders in the early phases of development is not sustainable

Step 2: Goals, Roles and Outcomes

Establish

- Project outcomes: What do all stakeholders want to achieve through this project?
- Roles and responsibilities: Who will do what and when?
- Skills the youth expect to gain through the project: What do the youth want to learn?



This pre-planning is an opportunity for the youth to **develop a vision and plan** that includes the voices of all key stakeholders to ensure a project that everyone can buy into. This extensive preparation will also help facilitate the next phase of the project, taking action.

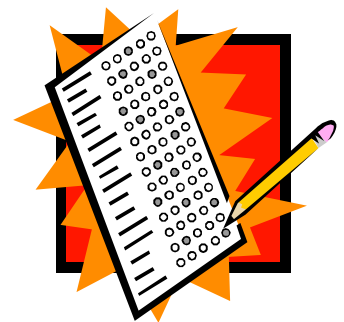
Step 3: Taking Action

Now that the goals, roles and outcomes are, it is time to put the plans into action. Project management and youth-adult collaboration become critical elements in the taking action phase (see pages 11 and 12). This will be an opportunity for everyone to learn new skills and hone existing ones. Youth will require support and flexibility from adults as they may struggle with group dynamics, meeting deadlines, and maintaining regular communications with stakeholders.

It is important to provide ongoing assessment of the plans and project once it has gotten started. This:

- Ensures the quality and effectiveness of a project and
- Allows the youth to address any necessary changes

The youth can ensure that their plans originally set continue to be suitable, the goals and outcomes are

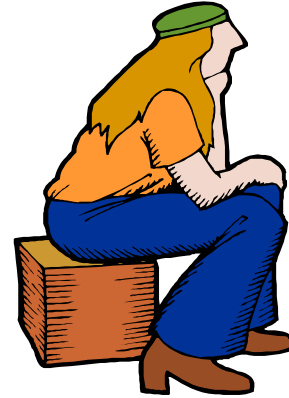


being met effectively, and any needed changes can occur.

Step 4: Ending Thoughtfully

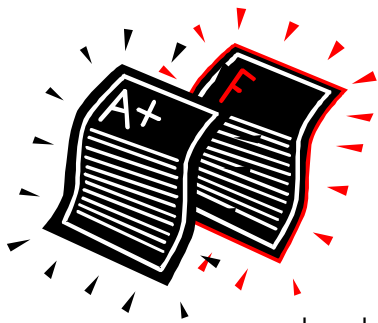
Upon completion of project, there must be:

- Reflection by participants
- Evaluation of project outcome and learning
- Individual recognition
- Public recognition for the stakeholders



Reflection

Reflection plays a key role in the learning and development of the youth. It offers youth the opportunity to more deeply examine their role in the community, the needs of it, and the role they play in addressing those needs. Youth should be encouraged to express these reflections through all phases of the project, but particularly in the end. Youth can record their reflections by journaling, written or photo; offering an oral presentation; writing an article for a community newspaper or the organizations newsletter; other artistic expressions such as a painting, collage, poem, song, etc; or a more traditional written summary or report.



Evaluation

The sustainability of the project and relationship with the partnering organization require an evaluation of the project outcomes and vision. It will also be important for youth leaders to evaluate the learning outcomes and skill development of the youth. The leadership and management skills that youth exercise in this activity should not be overlooked but recognized and acknowledged.

Recognition

Recognition validates everyone's contributions and increases awareness in the community. This could be a celebration, media coverage, or an award or certificate ceremony. Use your imagination to create an event and activity that acknowledges the work everyone has done.



Project Management

Coordinating a service learning project requires Project Management skills that youth may or may not have. Youth leaders should discuss Project Management with the youth in the early phases of the project. Project management is an invaluable set of skills that youth will be able to develop through service learning.

What is a project?

A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to create unique product, service or result.

What is Project Management?

1. Identify project requests between partnering organizations.
2. Establish clear goals and objectives for the project.
3. Balance demands for project quality, scope, time and cost.
4. Adapt specifications as needed throughout phases of the project.

Why Project Management?

1. Quality maintenance- high quality projects must be within the cost/budget, scope, and on time.
2. Reduce risk of failure; be able to respond to uncertainty.
3. Sustainability!

Which skills needed for successful Project Management?

- Interpersonal: communication, influence, leadership, motivation, negotiation, conflict management, project/problem solving
- General management skills: finance, contracts, communications, forms, letters
- Knowledge about the project topic or issue. Bring in an expert to discuss the topic or have youth do research.

Youth-Adult Collaboration

To increase youth participation and develop more supportive youth-adult partnerships in community-based projects youth leaders should take a **youth-driven approach**. Adults play a supporting role by monitoring the progress of the project, while youth take the lead.

Results of this approach with the youth include but are not limited to the development of:

- Leadership and essential administrative skills
- Advanced critical thinking
- Greater connection to the issue the project is addressing
- Sense or feeling of responsibility for the outcome of the project

A youth-driven approach is most successful when:

- Youth and adults enter into a collaborative effort as equal participants. It may be a struggle for some adults to work with youth or students from a place of equity. Be patient and flexible.
- Adults **MUST** resist “taking over” while the youth adjust to taking the lead.
- Both youth and adults must learn to work together. This is key to the success of any project.

Effective collaboration of youth and adults can result in:

- Better decision making
- Full engagement of youth
- Positive impact on the recipients of a project by exemplifying intergenerational partnerships

- Understanding the project environment: cultural and social; international and political; physical (outdoors, office, etc)
- Intergenerational understanding with respect and mutual trust
- Open doors for youth voices in the community and their influence in their community's institutions and policies.

Community Mural Project



Mural Project History

The *Community Mural Project* was born out of youth's desire to create art in the community. In the spring of 2005, a small group of youth partnered with a local business to paint a mural to cover graffiti.



Later in 2005 and 2006, three additional murals were painted. Participating youth organizations included:

- The Power of Hope: Empowering Youth Through the Arts, www.powerofhope.org
- CISV Victoria: Building Global Friendship, www.cisvvictoria.ca
- St. Aidan's United Church Youth Program, www.staidansunited.com

Initiated by former Graffiti By-law Officer Walter Lowe and Tamara Thorpe in 2005, local youth organizations were paired with local businesses cited by By-law Enforcement to paint a mural to cover and deter graffiti. The following was proposed and agreed upon:

- By-law Enforcement informs businesses when cited of the option for a mural by a local youth organization.
- A list of interested businesses is sent to Tamara Thorpe, who coordinates sites with youth organizations.
- Interested youth groups contact the business owner directly.
- Youth organizations are responsible for communicating with the owner, developing a design that is mutually acceptable by all stakeholders, coordinating all supplies, the painting and clean up.
- The business owner is responsible for all expenses.

Benefits of the Community Mural Project:

- Youth engaged in civic issues and community service
- Cost effective solution for businesses to clean up graffiti
- A long-term solution for an ongoing problems with graffiti
- Supports civic and community partnerships with youth
- Sharing resources and increasing awareness of needs of the community



Future Goals:

- Strengthen partnership with By-law enforcement
- Increase awareness of project in the community
- Engage youth offenders in the project
- Create a database of participating youth organizations
- Sustainability!

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead

Completed Murals in Victoria, BC

Before



After



Painted by Power of Hope Youth, Spring 2005, Cook Street Village



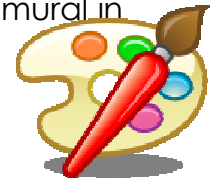
Painted by CISV Victoria Youth, Spring 2006, Vic West, Catherine Street



Painted by St. Aidan's United Church Youth, Spring 2006, Victoria, Mason Street

Paint a Mural in Your Community!

This section of the guide includes information you will need to paint a mural in your community.



Get Informed

- Learn about the graffiti by-laws in your community. Contact:
 - Graffiti by-law enforcement
 - Local law enforcement and/or their TAG (Together Against Graffiti) programs
 - Local Business Association
 - Businesses effected by graffiti and tagging
 - Local art agencies or organizations involved with painting murals

Design the Mural

Once you have established a partnership with a mural site, a “to-scale” drawing of the mural design is needed.

- Recruit a volunteer artist to do the design. This could be a member of your congregation, organization or community.
- Engage youth in a creative brainstorming process to design the mural.
 - A question to ask, “What is it you want people to know about your and/or feel when they see the mural?”
- The mural design should be done in collaboration with the stakeholders (i.e. business owners, law enforcement, government agency).
 - Discuss any design elements they may desire, and then share them with the youth, and present mural design options to the stakeholders for approval.

Get Your Supplies

It is important to discuss any cost and expenses up front with the stakeholders. In the Victoria Community Project all business owners are responsible for the cost of paint and supplies. The



expense of the murals has been significantly lower than other options to cover graffiti. Your youth group could apply for a grant or fundraise if so desired.

Get Your Supplies cont'd



- Contact local paint and hardware stores. **Green Tip:** To keep cost down and to have a smaller environmental footprint use mis-tint paints. Paint stores typically have a section of paints that have been returned that they are willing to sell at a discount. They may also allow you to return any unused paint, so you do not have to dispose of it or store any paint you do not use.
- **Green Tip:** Local dumps or recycling centers may have paint recycle programs. These paints may be available at no cost and any unused paint can be returned.

Tips and Suggestions for Success

These tips and suggestions are to assist you with a mural in your community.

- Have fun!
- Even a small group of youth can accomplish a lot.
- Encourage the youth to participate at all stages of the project.
- Schedule the mural for a weekend, in back to back days, with the first day being longer. If it is a large wall, and requires more time start on Friday evening or schedule it on a Pro-D Day weekend or long holiday weekend.
- Ask local artists and the paint store staff for tips and suggestions on painting.
- If you have a large group of youth, schedule youth in 2-3 hours shifts. This prevents having too many people to manage (it can be hard to keep track of the youth and supplies with a large group) and also allows youth who may have other obligations to participate.
- Invite members of the congregation, organization and community to join you.
- Send out a press release to create awareness (see media advisory in Resources).

- Plan for lunch and snacks. Youth can bring their own lunch or it can be provided, just let them know in advance.
- **Safety Tip:** On a warm day, have lots of water and sunscreen.
- Take before and after photos.

Once you have gotten underway, please feel free to contact me to ask questions or share lessons you have learned from your mural project. If you send pictures, I will post them on my web site www.tntdevelopment.org.

Supplies List



- Exterior Acrylic Paint (flat, no shine), multiple colors and shades
- Paint rollers and brushes in various sizes
- Paint trays and cups (**Green Tip:** use recyclable plastic containers from home)
- Plastic or tarp to protect ground or sidewalk
- Paint stirrers
- Paint can opener
- Rags for clean up
- Water buckets
- Ladders and step stool (**Safety Tip:** only to be used by participants 18 years and up)
- Trash bags

Set-up

The mural site must be a wall that is flat, dry and clean. Paint does not dry on wet surfaces or in very cold weather. If a site has moss or plant growth, it should be cleared prior to the day of painting. If the site has a wall texture that cannot be painted on directly with brushes and rollers consider putting up boards. See *the Cook Street mural on page 15*.



Like any painting project, it can get messy. A ground covering, rags, and vigilance should help keep the site clean.

Find out if there is access to water on site. If so, you can fill your water buckets on site, if not you have to have them filled before you arrive. The paint store has large paint buckets with lids that can be used to transport water to and from the site. **Green Tip:** Do not dump water used to clean the paint brushes and rollers at the mural site. Fill the buckets at the beginning of the



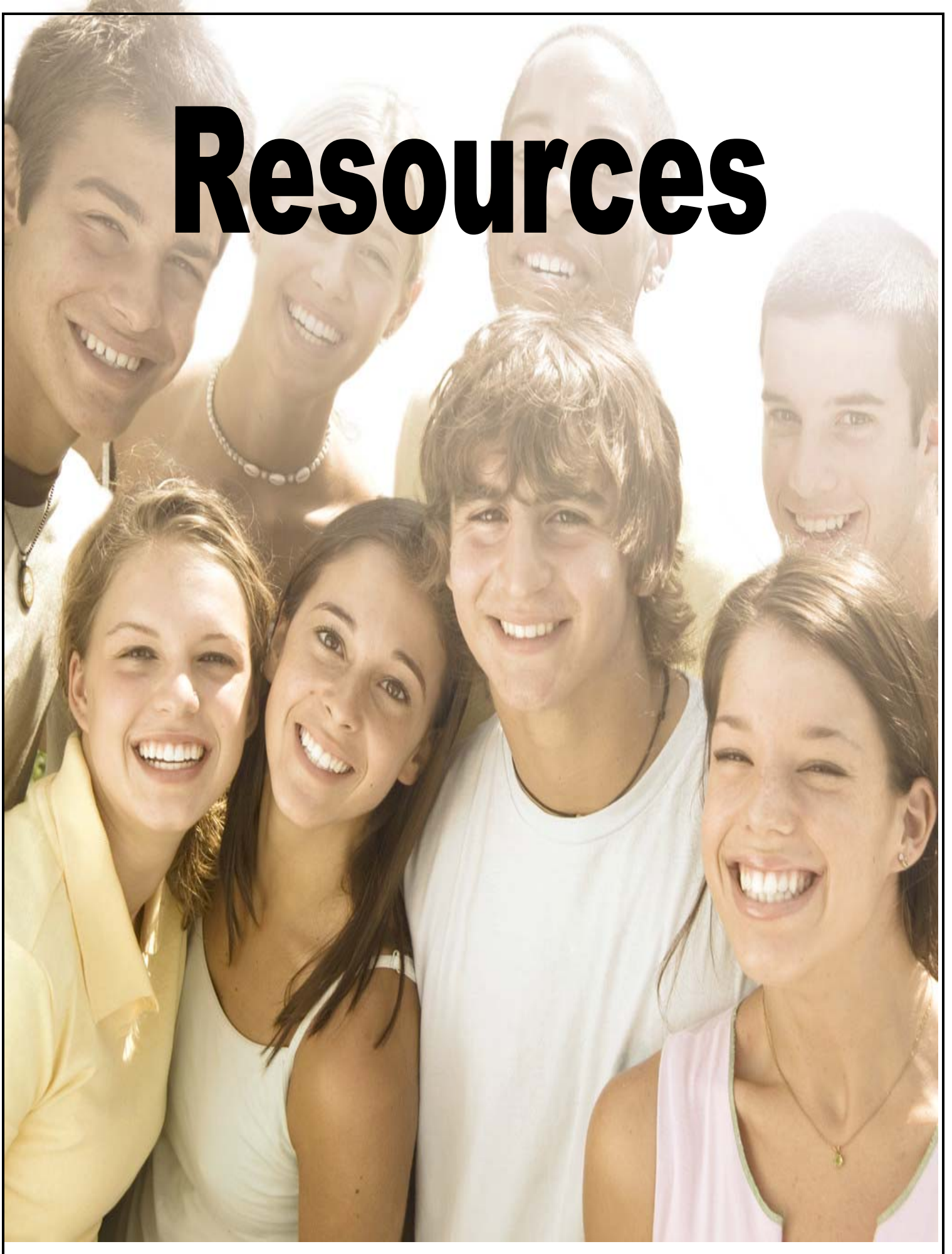
day and use them for the whole day. Paint stores will dispose of the dirty water for you.

Clean-up

Have a plan before you paint for the disposal of water, trash and paint. The site should look better when you leave than when you arrived. Clean only brushes and rollers that can be reused. Others can be thrown out, rollers are very difficult to clean and take quite a bit of water to do so.

Green Tip: Paint can be reused by your group or returned to the paint store or recycling center.

Resources



Sample Media Advisory

December 7, 2007

Media Advisory

Community Mural Project: Engaging Youth in Service

Young people from the Greater Victoria Area will be painting a mural this weekend to cover up and deter future graffiti and tagging.

- Who: United Church Youth Group (ages 14-18)
- When: Sunday, December 9th from 10 am to 4 pm
- Where: 1XXX Yates Street
- Contact: Tamara Thorpe, 250-514-XXXX

Media coverage of the event is invited. Youth are making a positive change in their community. Both business owners and members of the communities have expressed great enthusiasm and appreciation for the murals. Due to the increase of graffiti in the downtown area, "The Community Mural Project" is in greater demand and being encouraged and endorsed by Victoria By-law Enforcement and Victoria Police Department.

"The Community Mural Project" is a collaborative effort between Victoria By-law Enforcement, Victoria Police Department, Cloverdale Paint and Victoria's youth to serve their community, clean up Victoria, protect business owners from future tagging, and express themselves creatively. Since 2005 local youth organizations have been paired with local businesses cited by By-law Enforcement to paint a mural to cover and deter graffiti. This is the 5th mural being painted and would be the first to be covered by the media.

Sample Letter of Interest

United Church Youth Program
3703 B Street
Victoria, BC

October 23, 2007

To whom it may concern;

We are a group of youth working on an Interfaith community building project sponsored by the United Church. Our goal is to paint murals on walls with graffiti as a contribution to the community. We think that your wall would be an excellent place for a mural. Would you be interested?

This is an opportunity to cover existing graffiti, deter future graffiti and bring a positive change to the community. If you are interested in this opportunity, we are ready to start painting this fall. The paint and supplies are provided by Cloverdale Paint at a discount. We ask that you cover the cost and we will pick up all supplies, collaborate with you on the mural design, paint and clean up.

To contact us, please call our youth group leader at 514-XXXX. We will also give you a call in a couple of days to follow up.

Thank you for your consideration,

The youth at the United Church,

Tabitha, Jacob and Kendra