

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Community Service: Making It Meaningful

**Why do service?** You learn about the community and yourself. You will also take the first step toward creating history instead of only reading about it.

### Tips on getting started

A) **Picking your placement** – Jot down these lists and it will help you find the kind of service that you care about and that interests you.

- List three problems in the community (Boynton, Ithaca, US, the Earth) that make you mad and that you feel should change.

- List three jobs you would like or even love to have when you get older?

- List three jobs you would dislike or even hate to have when you get older?

B) **Contacting a placement** – You would think it would be easy to volunteer, but sometimes it takes many phone calls or emails; keep at it until you find a place that suits you. *Before* contacting anyone, make sure to check out an agency's website if possible. Also, *before* calling be sure to have thought about when you are available; have a pen and paper handy to write down information, such as the address, name of the person you'll meet, time, and so forth.

Here is a short script you may use when calling:

*Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I a student at \_\_\_\_\_ Boynton Middle School.. I am interested in finding out about volunteering at your agency. May I please speak with the volunteer coordinator or someone who could help me?*

[You may need to leave a phone number and good times to call at this point, which you should think about before hand. But if you do get the right person on the line, here is what you might say:]

*I would like to learn more about volunteering and the kinds of things I might do to help.*

*Great, I would like to set up a time to come in. I am available after four on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Will one of those days work for you? [Obviously, those days and times are just examples.]*

[Be sure to jot down the date, time and name of your contact.]

*Thank you very much. I look forward to learning more and volunteering.*

If you would rather email, you could write something like:

Dear Volunteer Coordinator [or the name of the person, if you know it]:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a student at Boynton Middle School. I am very interested in volunteering at your agency. Is it possible to set a time to come in and talk about volunteering? I am available after four on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as anytime Saturday morning.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

C) **The first meeting** – here is how to prepare –

- Write some questions. For example, you might want to know if you need a parent to volunteer with you or if there is training needed.
- Dress properly. Generally, just dress like you do for school. But once you have a placement, think about the kind of work. If you're helping to clean at a soup kitchen, wear work clothes. If you're visiting at a nursing home, dress up a bit.
- Be a bit early (15 minutes) so you can find the right office and person.

### **Reflection**

While you're volunteering, take the time to keep a journal – this can include writing, art, questions, connections to your classes, etc. This will help you think about what you gained from the whole experience. Here are some questions to consider:

- What are your goals for this experience? What do you hope to learn and/or achieve?
- How does the service connect to big issues – poverty, human rights, the environment? What new have you learned about these kinds of issues?
- Do you feel like you are truly helping? Why or why not?
- Do you like the time in the community and what you're doing? Why?
- What kinds of problems or challenges have come up while volunteering? How did you deal with them?
- What kinds of skills have you used or worked on? Patience, openness, diligence, and so forth. Do you feel more confident than before? How so?
- Describe a memorable or favorite moment from volunteering.
- What is your relationship like with other people where you're volunteering?
- Do you see any connections to things you've learned at school in social studies, English or science?
- Do you think you'll do any more similar volunteering? Why or why not?
- What do you think you remember about volunteering five years from now?