

# Learning Through Service



Gina Boscarino, Group Specialist  
Wedgwood Christian Services

# Objectives for this Session

- Define Service Learning (and what makes it different from volunteering!)
- Examine benefits of Service Learning
- Brainstorm ways to enhance your programming and meet community needs through service learning
- Share our personal experiences developing a Service Learning program

# WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?

*“...A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”*

-National Service Learning Clearinghouse

## SIMPLIFIED DEFINITION:

# SERVICE LEARNING: A way of learning new things by helping others in your community



# Volunteering VS Service Learning

	Volunteering	Service Learning
<b>Beneficiary</b>	Service recipient(s)	Service recipient (s) AND student providers
<b>Focus</b>	Providing meaningful service	Providing meaningful service AND enhancing classroom learning
<b>Nature of Service</b>	Based on student interest/ motivation	Based on course topic or discipline/ skills learned in class
<b>Processing</b>	No formal processing required	Requires personal reflection and connection to course content
<b>Community Focus</b>	Less structure in place to be explicitly educated on local community	Strong focus on working with and learning about local community

# Benefits of Service Learning

- Hands on
- Encourages civic engagement and responsibility
- Teaches empathy
- Gives students an opportunity to test skills/ideas learned in class in a real world setting
- Helps the community
- Allows students to practice interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (problem solving, written and verbal communication, teamwork, etc.)

# Benefits of Service Learning (cont.)

- Programs that include service projects have been shown to have a positive impact on risktaking behaviors

- **Ex-Teen Outreach program (TOP)**

In a 10-year evaluation of the program, TOP students, when compared with a comparison sample, demonstrated a:

- 60% lower school dropout rate,
- 33% lower pregnancy rate,
- 18% lower rate of school suspension and
- 8% lower rate of school course failure.

*-Philiber Research Associates*

# Benefits of Service Learning

**Studies of other programs have shown that students who participated in service learning:<sup>1</sup>**

- Scored significantly higher than non participants on all measures of ethics (Furco, 2000)
- Demonstrated enhanced academic outcomes (Furco, 2007; Davila and Mora, 2007)
- Demonstrated an increase in prosocial behaviors, including acceptance of diversity, connection to cultural heritage, development of ethics, and strengthening of protective factors related to resilience (Laird and Black, 2002)

<sup>1</sup> RMC. *Impacts of Service-Learning on K-12 Participants*. Scotts Valley, CA: Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2003/2007

# About Our Program



- In our 4<sup>th</sup> year
- Funded by a grant through the Michigan abstinence program (MAP)
  - Requirements: 100 students-10 hours of service learning **in addition** to receiving 14 hours of MAP education
- Partnership with Godwin Heights Middle School and York Creek Apartments

# About our Program (continued)

- Have completed groups with 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in our current MAP sites
- Each group has been slightly different in terms of projects and topics
- Groups completed through the Godwin after-school program, art classes, advanced health class, science class, and “Create, Invent, Serve” elective, as well as our summer programs at York Creek Apartments

# 2 Minute Table Talk

- Who are some groups living in your community that your students could serve/help?



# Brainstorming Activity!!!



# Instructions

- Using the provided sticky notes, write down 1-3 ideas of things that our class could do to help meet the needs of a particular group  
(Example: For Low Income Families-  
Organize a canned food drive)
- Place the sticky note on the giant paper for that group
- Continue around the room until your table has placed one sticky note on each paper

# Integrating Service Learning into MAP Curriculum

Consider the topics you cover in your MAP programming....

- Healthy Relationships
- HIV/AIDS and other STDs
- Teen Pregnancy
- ??



What are some service learning projects that you could integrate to build on what is being learned in class?

# The Process

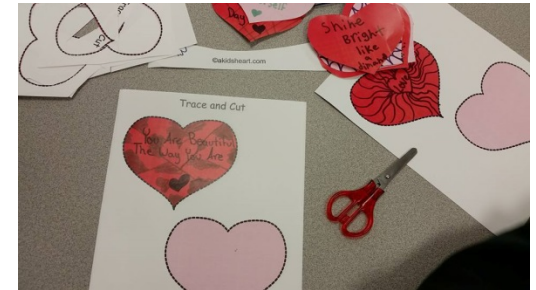
- Varies!
- Typically spend 1-2 sessions discussing service learning and the definition of community
- If students are going to be part of the planning process, we spend another 1-2 days discussing community needs and brainstorming project ideas
- Projects completed in or outside of school
- Reflection/Processing usually on the last day



# The Projects



- Birthday cards/kits for the elderly
- Letters to Veterans
- The 'Art of Community Mural'
- Hygiene kits for homeless teens
- Blankets for young mothers and homeless shelters
- "Buddy Benches"
- "Empty Bowls" Fundraiser for food pantry
- Comfort kits/Valentines for Wedgwood Residential kids
- Community Park and school grounds cleanup
- Activity books for children's hospital
- Dog/cat toys for animal shelter and Adopt-A-Pet poster campaign



And more!

# Example 1: Service Learning in Advanced Health

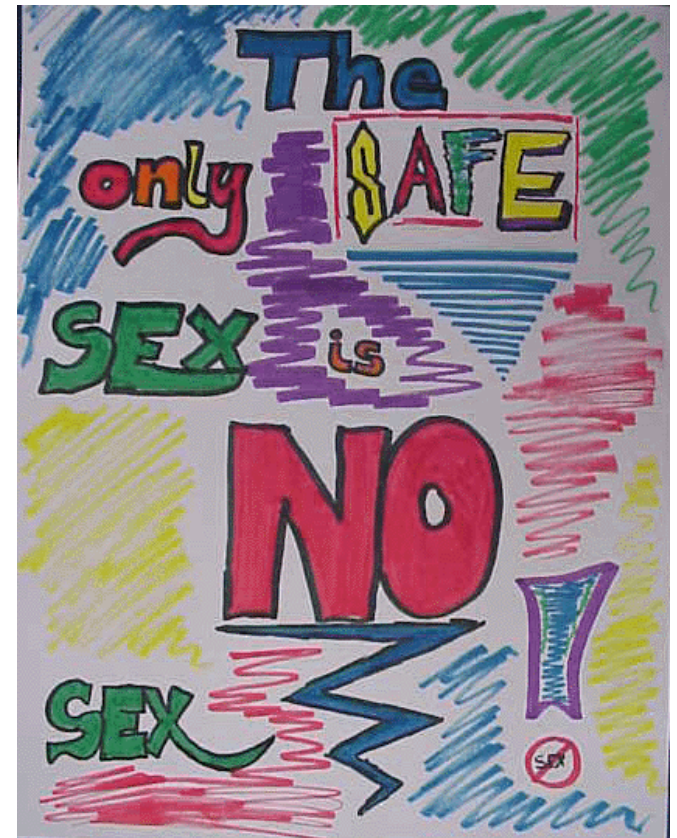
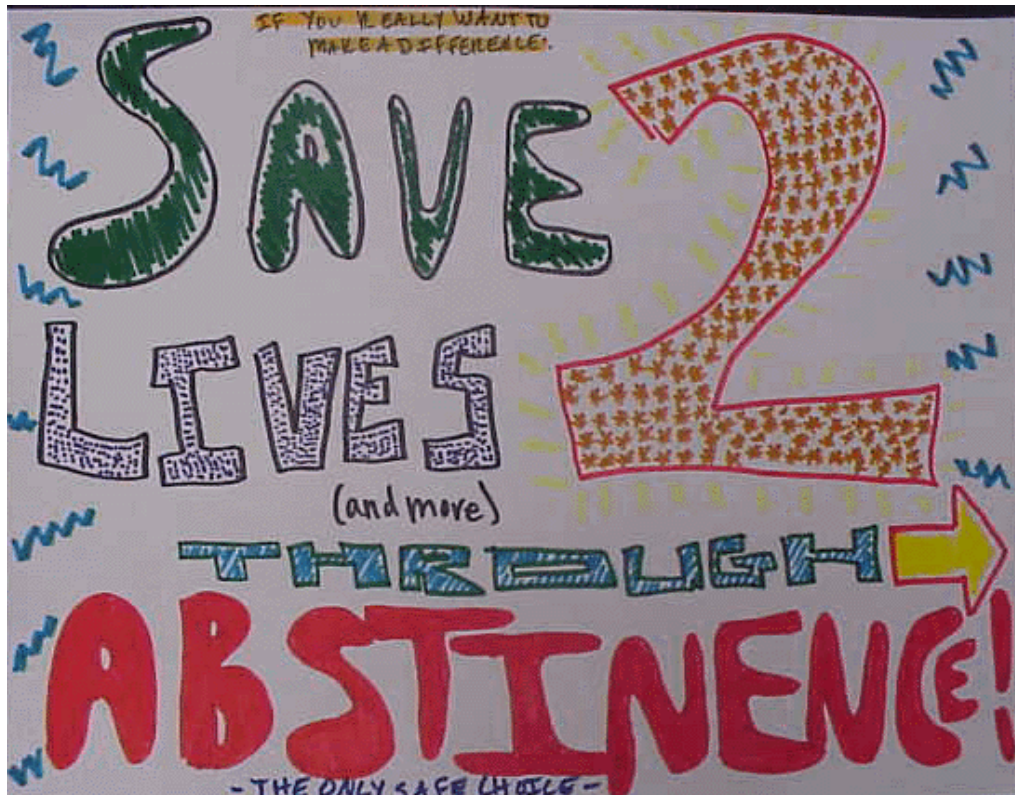
- Projects directly corresponded with topics addressed in MAP curriculum
  - Sexually Transmitted Diseases
  - Pregnancy
  - Dating Violence (focus on human trafficking)

# Project 1- STI Testing Advocacy

- Students learned about STIs, testing methods, and abstinence as prevention
- Worked in groups to come up with slogans and design posters that either
  - A) Educated people about specific STIs
  - B) Encouraged people to get tested
  - C) Encouraged abstinence as the only 100% effective way to avoid STIs
- Posters were hung around school and classroom

# Popular Slogans:

- Don't do a thing without that (wedding) ring!
- Are you positive you're negative?
- Don't catch any at all! (Pokemon)



# Project 2- Pregnancy

- Students learned about baby needs and stressors parents face through a teen parenting simulation
- Researched a local organization, Hope Unexpected, that provides resources, mentoring, and parenting classes to young Mothers
- Put together fleece blankets and donated them to Hope Unexpected





# Project 3-Human Trafficking

- Guest Speaker: Nikeidra Debarge of Wedgwood's Manasseh Project
- Students learned about Human Trafficking and how teens get brought into the 'life', as well as relationship dynamics and other factors that make it hard for them escape



- Students created “welcome kits” for girls to receive upon being admitted into WW residential unit
  - Kits included colorful socks, kleenex, hair ties, wipes, shampoo or conditioner, soap, and chapstick or lipgloss and handwritten notes of encouragement



- Also collected smoothie recipes for girls' fundraising efforts

## Example 2: Service Learning in Art Class

- Introduced concept of service and community through projects that met state requirements for art education
- Completed while students were receiving MAP education in their science classes

# Project 1- The Art of Community

- Students decorated a 5in by 5in canvas tile with colors, designs, and images that they felt symbolized their role in the community

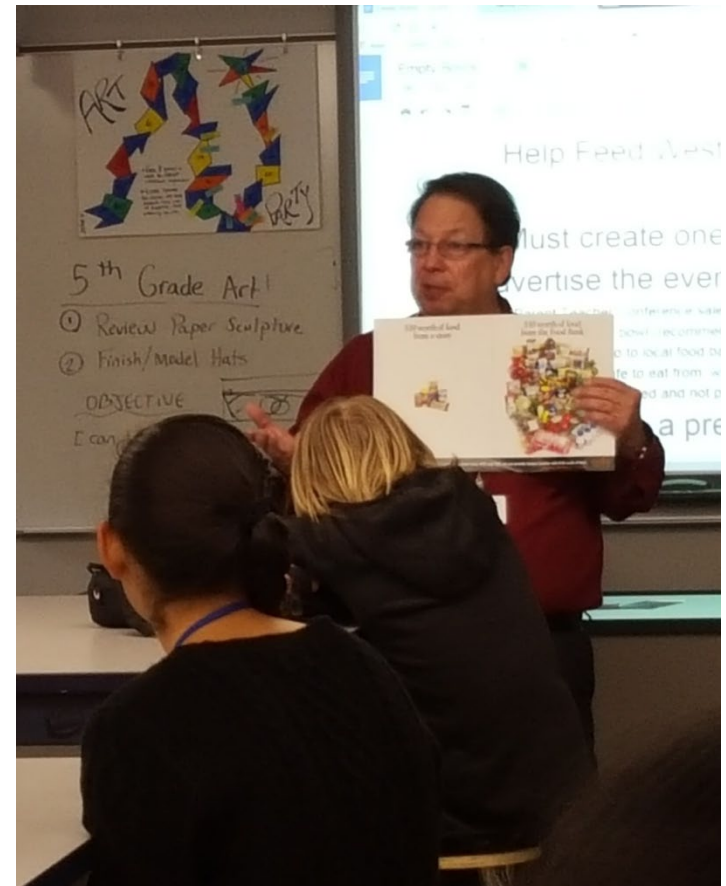


- Tiles were then arranged into two separate murals and placed in a display case in the main hallway at school

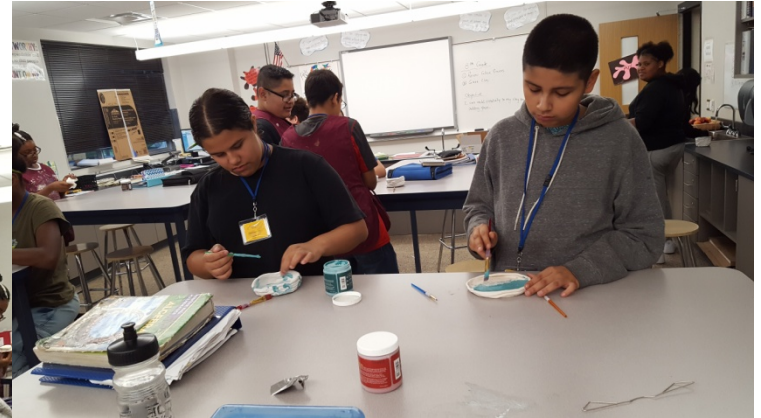


# Project 2- Empty Bowls

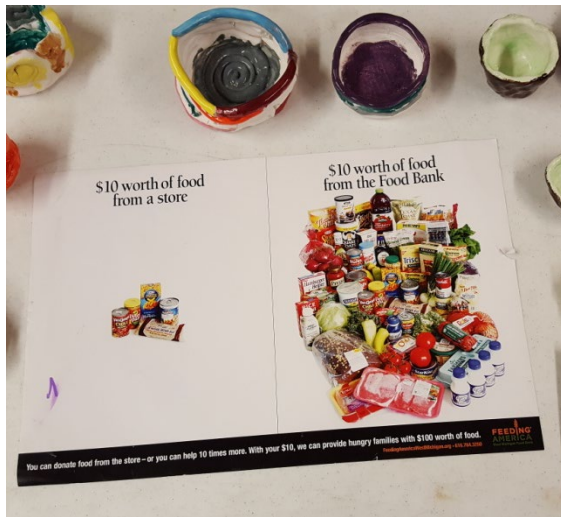
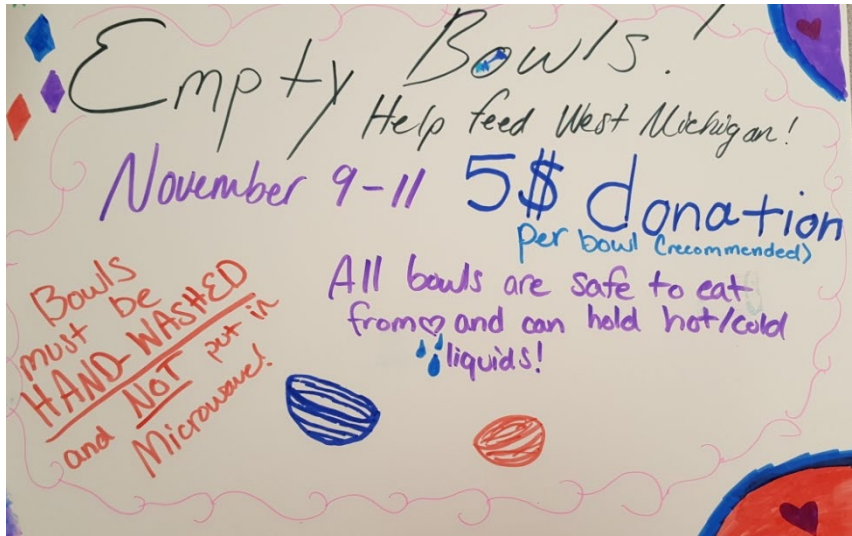
- Students learned about some of the issues in their community and chose to focus on poverty/hunger
- Guest Speaker, Dale Echavarria from Family Services of Wyoming spoke to the class about hunger and the need for donations at their local food bank



Students designed, created, and painted clay coil bowls to be sold as a fundraiser for the food bank



They sold the bowls themselves during parent teacher conferences.....

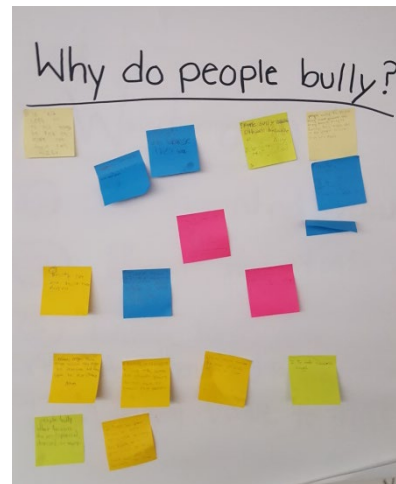
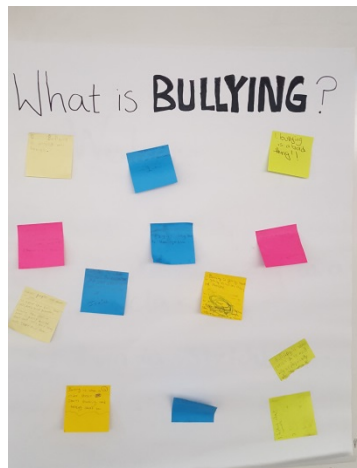


....And raised over \$400 to be donated to the food bank!!!!



# Project 3: Buddy Benches

- Early in the year, students identified bullying as one of the biggest problems at their school



- Wanted to do something that would encourage empathy, inclusion, and understanding within the school

# The Solution? Buddy Benches!



**Buddy Bench**

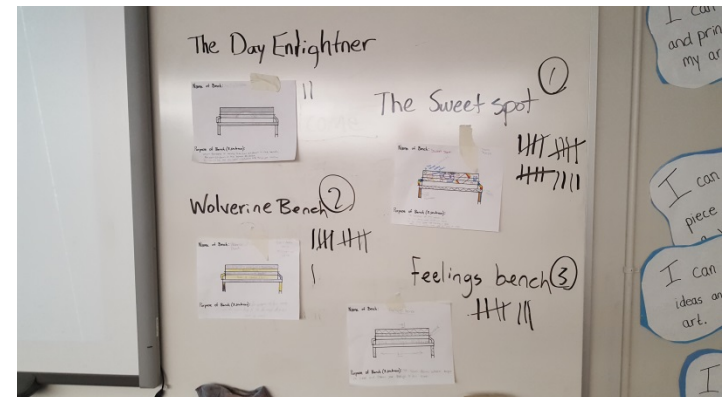
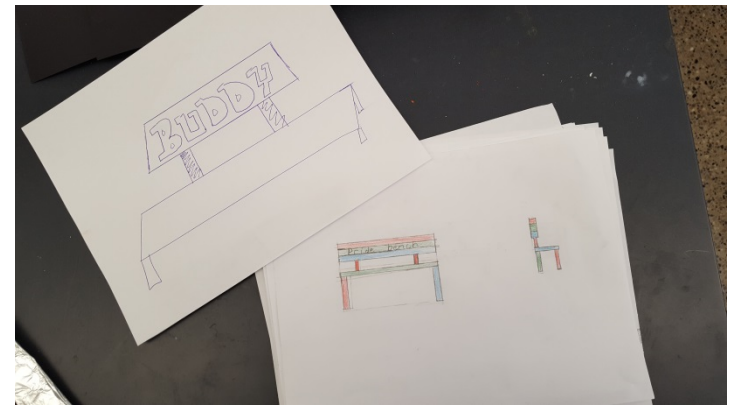
If you choose to sit on the bench, you *MUST* say yes to the first friend who invites you to play, or walk and talk.

If you see a friend when you are sitting on the bench, invite them to play, or walk and talk.

Two friends sitting on the bench can turn to each other and invite each other to play, or walk and talk.

# Step 1: Make it more age appropriate

- Students worked in groups to come up with designs for the buddy bench theme/name
- Each group also wrote out a concept description for their design, explaining what the purpose of the bench was and how to use it
- Classes voted on the top 4 designs, ultimately deciding on the “sweet spot”, a place where people can go to cool down when they are having a tough time or just want to talk to someone



# Step 2: Build It!

We brought in facilitators from Wedgwood's ETP (Employment Training Program), who taught the students about construction and working safely with tools.





With help from the facilitators, students built, sanded, and painted 6 5-foot long benches.



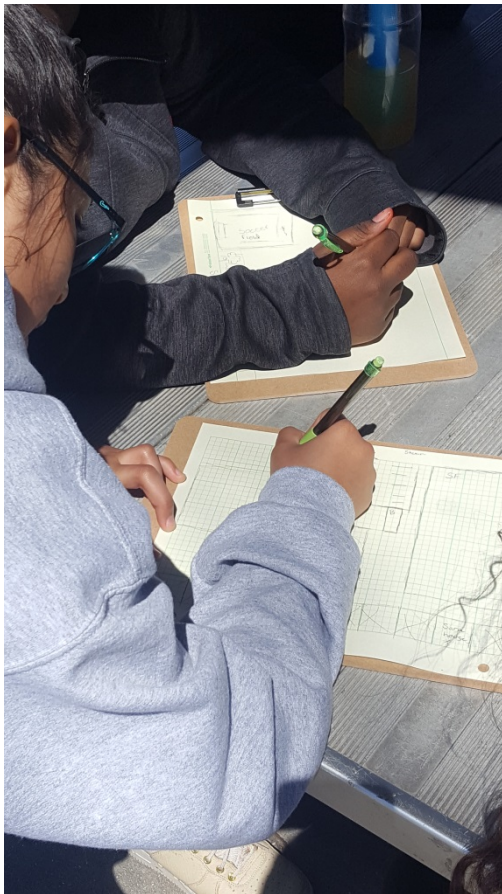


## Example 3- Service Learning in Science

- Projects designed to fit in with class lessons about the environment and sustainability
- “Work day” planned to take place during students’ trip to a local park to test the quality of the stream
- Multiple stations/service projects:
  - Park cleanup, green mapping, and decorating lunch sacks for Kids Food Basket



Kids used information gleaned from green mapping to write letters to the Parks officials with suggestions for how to make the park more environmentally friendly.



5-4-18

Dear Mr. Anderson  
I think creating a flower garden is a good idea. I think creating a flower garden is a good idea because flowers are good for the environment. Flowers help release oxygen into the air. Another reason I believe having a flower garden is a good idea is because the flowers could draw in more people. The flowers could draw in more people because some people think flowers are pretty.

Sincerely,  
Lilli

Dear Mr Anderson

We are writing because we feel there should be bags for dog waste at the park. First, some people don't pick up their dog's waste, when it's left on the grass, it makes the park look unclean. If we had bags for dog waste, people would feel more compelled to clean it up. Secondly, leaving it on the ground is bad for the environment. When it rains, the rain picks up the dog waste and washes it into the creek. This can then affect the wild life around the stream.

Sincerely,  
Keilyn Cook

Dear Mr. Jeffrey Anderson, We are students from Godwin Middle School and we think that there needs to be more trash cans added to Hillcroft Park.

We need to get more trash cans for people to throw away all the trash instead of throwing it on the floor. If there are more trash cans people won't have to walk a long way to a trash can.

We need to get more trash cans because animals could get harmed if they eat trash. So if animals eat trash they could get sick and they could choke and die.

In Conclusion, we need more trash cans because many things can happen if we don't have trash cans and it's making our environment unhealthy.

Sincerely, Anicia and Treton.

# Things We Learned From Our Experience

## 1. Be creative!

You may need to find places/times to work with kids outside of the traditional classroom or group setting (afterschool programs, lunchtime, elective courses, classes other than health)

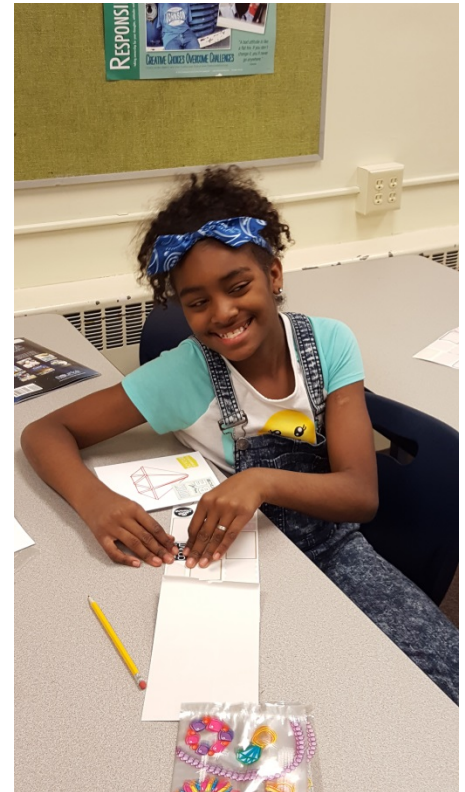
## 2. Go places if you can!

Not only is it fun and interesting for the kids, but it makes the experience more real.

3. If you can't travel, find a way to help them connect with the issue/ population you are serving!

- Guest Speakers
- Books (Personal narratives)
- Videos (News stories and interviews)
- Simulations

Help them to understand how important the issue is so they can feel good about their efforts!



4. Don't forget to make time to reflect on the experience!

Many ways to process:

- Discussion
- Journal/Personal Narrative
  - Poster
- Presentation

This is a KEY part of the service learning process!

# Reflection Questions

1. What was the most important lesson you learned?
2. What was the best/worst part?
3. How has this experience changed your opinion about \_\_\_\_\_?
4. What impact did you have on your community?
5. What have you learned about yourself?
6. How have you been challenged through this experience?
7. What was surprising or unexpected?

# Questions?

