

ONWARD

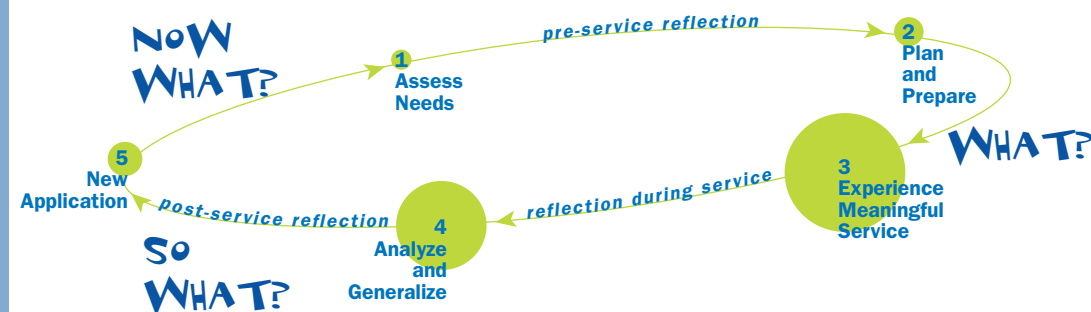
to Community Service Learning

You've got your group together for the first meeting. You've discussed the YEA difference and other important details. Now it's time to move forward.

To ensure a more productive experience for group members, follow these steps before and after each meeting:

- Ask one or two members to help. Let them help you decide which activities to tackle and who'll be responsible for setting up the room, getting supplies, introducing the activity and processing the experience.
- Arrive early to set up the meeting space and make sure necessary supplies are on hand. Take time to review the activity and any last-minute changes with your helpers.
- Unless you're working in the Planning section of the YEA guide (where group members tend to follow their own interests), try to vary the composition of teams needed for each activity so that the same people are not always together. In a successful team, all members should feel comfortable working together.
- At the end of the meeting, summarize what the group has done. Thank your helpers, and congratulate the group on its accomplishments. Ask for comments and suggestions, as well as helpers, for the next meeting.
- When the group leaves, spend a few minutes with session leaders to talk about what was successful, and what could be changed the next time someone does this activity.

The Five-Part Community Service Learning Cycle



Source: Allan T. Smith, Ph.D., National 4-H Program Leader, Families, 4-H & Nutrition

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In 4-H there is a five-part Experiential Learning Cycle through which participants take part in an activity, share results, discuss the outcome, connect the experience to real-life activities and apply what was learned in future situations.

The Community Service Learning Cycle is similar, but expanded to include assessing needs, planning and preparation, and experiencing meaningful service. Reflecting on what has happened each step of the way is an integral part of the total experience.

VOLUNTEERS' GUIDE

SERVING others: a gift we give ourselves

Each of us needs to feel worthwhile—that what we do matters in the grand scheme of things. That's one of the reasons you signed on to be a volunteer leader.

In today's world, the need to feel useful may be even more keenly felt by teenagers. Not so long ago, young people were relied upon to help work the family farm or supplement the family income with part of their earnings. But recent studies show these kinds of opportunities have dwindled over the years, according to information compiled by the National 4-H Program.

By choosing to help teens learn how they can make a difference in the lives of others, you're making an indelible imprint on their lives. The experience will take them outside of themselves, and make them aware of how they can fit into the larger world around them.

But most importantly, they'll learn that, when they give of themselves, they receive much more in return.

"WE CANNOT ALWAYS BUILD THE FUTURE FOR OUR YOUTH, BUT WE CAN BUILD OUR YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE"

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT



Youth Experiencing Action

THE YEA DIFFERENCE

Learning by doing is at the heart of YOUTH EXPERIENCING ACTION.

It's not simply volunteering for a service project, but taking the time to strategize at the outset, and then later reflect on the whole experience. The YEA way is different from a typical approach to a community service project because, in the end, it results in a deeper level of commitment and understanding for participants.

Young people are more motivated to take part in programs when they're encouraged to be involved in decision-making, especially where they can have a positive impact on others.

In YEA, participants brainstorm, map out strategies, make decisions, take action, solve problems, cooperate, reflect, evaluate and pass on new-found knowledge to others.

This is called **Community Service Learning**.

Simply put, it means tying hands-on activities with critical-thinking skills to address real needs in the community. Studies show that when young people learn this way, it improves their confidence, problem-solving and leadership abilities, social skills and overall enjoyment of life.

And, they're more likely to volunteer in their communities as adults.

more about YEA

YEA rounds out a series of three programs developed for older youth by the Michigan 4-H Youth Development Programming Committee. The others are Peer Plus II, centering on developing individual skills, and Group Dynamite, which explores group development.

Geared toward young people aged 14 to 19, YEA activities may be used by any group that's interested in community service learning. The only requirement for membership is a commitment of time for a number of group meetings.

YEA projects can be led by older teens and adults with both community service learning experience and facilitation training, or who are interested in acquiring these skills.

There are at least two ways to form a YEA group. You can create a new one simply by advertising in your county MSU Extension newsletter. Or, by approaching an existing group—like 4-H, church youth, student councils or other youth organizations—to discuss taking on a YEA project.

Community service learning projects work best when they're held in the participants' own communities, where they feel most comfortable. They can be conducted throughout the year, depending on the interests of YEA participants.

JUMPING INTO YEA!

As a volunteer leader, you're setting the course for a rewarding experience for yourself and your group.

Adolescence is often characterized as a roller-coaster ride of conflicting emotions. Yet adults often point to their teen years as a time when they felt most enthusiastic and idealistic about changing the world for the better.

Channeling that energy and enthusiasm into a worthy cause—and helping teens to understand that their efforts can make a difference—is one of your most important tasks as a leader.

Other duties include recruiting group members, risk management, setting a regular meeting schedule, guiding the group's interests and making connections with community partners.

**GETTING UNDERWAY:
A LEADER'S CHECKLIST**

- ✓ Recruit Your Group Members
- ✓ Familiarize Yourself With the YEA Guide
- ✓ Check Out Accident Insurance With Your County MSU Extension Office
- ✓ Set a Time and Place for Meetings
- ✓ Discover Your Group's Volunteer Interests
- ✓ Begin Training With the YEA Guide

USING THE YEA GUIDE

As a first step, the guide will help you build your YEA team. From there, it outlines a series of activities and lessons that explore the community and help others. Finally, the guide will help your team plan, conduct and evaluate your YEA project.

Materials in the YEA Guide are arranged in an easy-to-follow curriculum of lectures, activities, handouts and ideas for

reflection and further work. Each section of the YEA Guide is designed to carry over for one to three group meetings, and contains several activities from which to choose.

Activities within the guide can be used several different ways. You can effectively combine three presentations, for example, in a series of special group sessions, as part of a regularly scheduled

meeting or in a weekend workshop. And, school classes or other non-4-H groups will find the material helpful when planning their own service-learning projects.

As the volunteer leader, it's up to you to decide what would work best for your group.

HELP FOR VOLUNTEER LEADERS

For additional tips on how to be a facilitator/leader and work with a group, contact your county MSU Extension office.

You'll find other resources there — as well as in the YEA Guide — to help your group develop a rewarding community service learning project.

The Perspective of State and National 4-H Leadership:

"Community Service Learning strengthens the skills and knowledge 4-H'ers are acquiring by actively combining their learning with service to help meet real community needs. Every 4-H participant is encouraged to take part in community service that fits his or her areas of learning, as an important feature of 4-H development."

The First Meeting

From the start, your task is to bring separate individuals together so they can work effectively as a group toward a common goal.

There's a host of entertaining activities within the guide to help build your YEA team spirit. They include skill-building sessions on cooperation, communication, sharing and listening. Some activities serve specifically as ice-breakers so participants can learn more about each other, and develop trusting relationships.

Above all, YEA is a learning experience. Your role is to encourage teens to enthusiastically participate in each activity in order to reap the maximum benefits.

YEA activities have been designed to build skills and relationships in a series of graduated steps. Ideally, the end result will be the creation of a dynamite, self-aware group of youths who performs an effective community service learning project.

Of course, you can't do this alone. For the group to become really effective and ultimately beneficial to the community, each member must take responsibility for attending meetings and participating in the various activities.

It's also crucial to set guidelines for the group, since participants need to feel they're in a safe environment for personal growth. At the start, each member should be able to agree to abide by the following guidelines:

- **Recognize each person in the group as a valuable member whose individuality and personal rate of growth needs to be accepted.**
- **Realize that to grow as individuals, it's important to be as honest as we can with ourselves and other group members.**
- **Understand that feelings, ideas, or reactions brought before the group are important and should be considered with respect, not put down.**
- **Respect each person's right to experience, share and grow in directions that seem most appropriate for him or her.**
- **Appreciate that group membership doesn't require agreement on every issue, but at the same time all opinions should be heard and respected.**