



Learn and Serve Colorado

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LEARN AND SERVE
COLORADO
@ DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

SPECIAL POINTS
OF INTEREST:

- **Making a case of Service-Learning,** pg.4
- **December Calendar listing deadlines and holidays,** pg. 4
- **Partnership Success Story,** pg. 3

VISTA: Strengthening Partnerships

Lila Cummings, a FrontRange Earth Force VISTA, started her work in August. FrontRange Earth Force (FREF) works with teachers in local schools and advisors in community organizations to bring the best in hands-on, youth-driven learning to their students. They help these committed educators and advisors combine service to the community with classroom learning ("service-learning") to better illustrate important academic, social and personal lessons to young people.

With passion, commitment, and hard work, AmeriCorps VISTA members create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

Each VISTA member makes a yearlong, full-time commitment to serve on a specific project at a nonprofit organization or public agency. VISTA members generally do not provide direct services, such as tutoring children or building homes. Instead, they focus their efforts on building the organizational, administrative, and financial capacity of organizations that fight illiteracy, improve health services, foster economic develop, and otherwise assist low-income communities.

Lila Cummings has found great success in helping strengthen the relationship between FREF and SPREE and what their partnership does for the youth in 9 Denver schools. SPREE (South Platte River Environmental Education) is the educational arm of The Greenway Foundation.

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MLK Day of Service: Plan Early and Build Partnerships

On the third Monday of January, Americans across the country will celebrate the national holiday honoring the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As they have since 1994, thousands of Americans will remember Dr. King by serving in their communities and making the holiday "a day on," not "a day off."

Service projects can be a great way to spread the word about your organization and to reach out across barriers to attract partners and sponsors.

The more broadly you cast your net, the more you will reflect the teaching of Dr. King—and the greater your success will be. Here are a few examples of the kinds of groups you could approach:

- ◆ **Groups with similar missions.** Such as AmeriCorps and Senior-Corps in your area.
- ◆ **Civil rights groups and King Holiday Commissions.** Dr. King gave his life in the civil rights struggle, and many organizations today continue to reflect his beliefs and ideology.

- ◆ **Corporations, business and unions.** Invite corporations to join you early on as full partners. Ask companies in your community, specially those that have operations near a service site, to help with project planning to pitch in with employee volunteers, as well as with funds and supplies.

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The next **Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice** that we will investigate this month is **Partnerships**.

Again, a growing body of research and practice suggests service-learning is most effective (i.e., has the best impacts on students and those they serve) when they integrate the 8 standards. We learned already about **Link to Curriculum**, when service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards. The other standards are: Meaningful Service, Youth Voice, Reflection, Partnerships, Diversity, Progress Monitoring and Duration and Intensity. This month the focus will be on building...



Partnerships

Service-learning partnerships are *collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community needs*.

Indicators:

1. Service-learning involves a variety of partners, including youth, educators, families, community members, community-based organizations, and/or businesses.
2. Service-learning partnerships are characterized by frequent and regular communication to keep all partners well-informed about activities and progress.
3. Service-learning partners collaborate to establish a shared vision and set common goals to address community needs.
4. Service-learning partners collaboratively develop and implement action plans to meet specified goals.
5. Service-learning partners share knowledge and understanding of school and community assets and needs, and view each other as valued resources.

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◆ **Government leaders.** Don't be afraid to reach out to the elected leaders in your community; they can be extremely

helpful in issuing a call to service and in getting partners on board. Check out the Governors Commission on Community Service: <http://www.colorado.gov/gccs/>

- ◆ **Faith-based organizations.** Churches, synagogues, mosques, and other places of worship have been partners in the King Service Day since its inception and many are already providing valuable services in their communities.

Others:

- ◆ **Schools and Colleges.**
- ◆ **National Service organizations.**
- ◆ **Sports Teams.**
- ◆ **Media Organizations.**

Getting Started for Day of Service:

Start early. Make sure that you allow ample time to develop, organize and carry out your project. Come up with timelines and stick to them!

Set realistic goals. Volunteers and partners feel better about giving their time and resources when they see results.

Build Partnerships.

Involve your partners.

Be inclusive. King Day service projects are a great way to reach out across neighborhoods and socioeconomic divides.

Actively recruit volunteers. Your partners can help you with this!

Choose projects carefully. Try to accomplish something meaningful to the community. Try to tackle projects that would not get done without the added energy of volunteers.

Anticipate transportation needs.

Be flexible. Choose a project that can easily be scaled up or down, depending on the number of volunteers you are able to attract.

Reach out to the media. Media coverage the day of the event can heighten volunteer pride and ensure the success of future projects.

Success Story:

Effective service-learning employs true collaborations that break down barriers between “server” and “served.” Projects leverage community assets, provide opportunities for direct contact between service-learning students and community members, and promote communication and interaction among stakeholders.

Partners provide time, expertise, materials, equipment, transportation, money, ideas, service sites, supervision, liability coverage, tools, guidance, and other support to projects. They help shoulder the load for projects, and participate out of mutual interest and for mutual benefit.

Partnership success story: Sterling, CO

“Sterling High and the youth council students there have been one of our biggest successes. The first real action step they took was to partner with their school board to host community cafes. The school and board have been going through some turmoil and as a result were not viewed well in the public. The youth council approached them about hosting a community café as a way to be proactive and involve the community in a positive way rather than to constantly get ridiculed.

The board reluctantly agreed.

The first café was a HUGE success! The community was very tactful due to the presence of the

students and followed the direction of the students well. They provided some very helpful feedback and ideas that the school board has implemented.

Since the first café, two others have been hosted by the YAC and school board. The board has asked that the youth council continue with them either annually or semi-annually. The National Association of Student Councils picked up on a story that was in the *Sterling Journal Advocate* and followed up with an article in their national *Leadership for Student Activities* magazine.”

During his lifetime, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. worked tirelessly towards a dream of equality. He believed in a nation of freedom and justice for all, and encouraged all citizens to live up to the purpose and potential of America by uniting and taking action to make his country a better place to live.

Day of Service ideas:

- ◆ Hold a workshop or put on a play about Dr. King’s life
- ◆ Organize an oral history project to document and trace community history
- ◆ Help prepare and serve meals at a homeless shelter
- ◆ Remove graffiti from a building, paint a mural, or clean up a public space
- ◆ Bring meals to homebound neighbors
- ◆ Make a public space accessible
- ◆ Build a playground or community garden
- ◆ Organize and participate in a neighborhood watch
- ◆ Collect clothing, canned goods, and other items for a local shelter
- ◆ Register bone marrow and organ donors
- ◆ Perform small chores and home maintenance projects for elderly neighbors
- ◆ Arrange a health fair
- ◆ Teach seniors how to surf the Internet
- ◆ Sponsor a legal clinic
- ◆ Devise craft projects for children in hospitals



MLK Service Day information comes from the MLK Service Day Toolkit that you can download for free at:

<http://www.mlkday.gov/>

along with free promotional materials, logs, planning and activity resources.

When you create your MLK Service Day project make sure to register it at the same website and at the Governor's Commission on Community Service

<http://www.colorado.gov/gccs/>

<http://www.mlkday.gov/>

So that people can find your opportunity and you can recruit volunteers.

VISTA: Strengthening Partnerships

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Lila has been engaged in helping FREF strengthen their collaboration and partnership with SPREE and the 9 SPREE schools. The partnership's focus has been on how to truly integrate SPREE into their schools. The partnership use to be weak; each organization simply worked on their "piece" of the work, but they knew that to achieve sustainability and institutionalization they had to make intentional steps to integrate their efforts. FrontRange Earth Force started to play a stronger role in the collaboration. They helped intertwine the tenants of service-learning into the SPREE Force program. The partners recognized that by transforming this program into a service-learning model, it would have more possibilities to be woven into the foundation of the SPREE schools.

Lila explains that the students' excitement is evidence of the programs great success. The students are excited for their missions, and look forward to graduating into the next grade to take part of that year's mission. These types of programs are a brilliant strategy to enhance student engagement and attachment to school.

Their mission is to inspire meaningful personal connections with nature in order to foster a lifelong sense of pride in, belonging to, and stewardship for our natural world by connecting the children of Denver to the South Platte River through engaging educational experiences. SPREE serves over 4,000 students a year from across Denver.

The SPREE program has grown out of an integration of education with stewardship, through collaboration between the Greenway Foundation and a group of DPS teachers. These teachers saw strength in providing experiential outdoor learning opportunities for their students.

Once SPREE was an established education program in the Denver Public School system, the SPREE School concept was born. SPREE Schools are schools that have adopted the South Platte as a centerpiece of their instruction and curriculum. At SPREE Schools, every student comes on a SPREE adventure every year. By building year to year, students at SPREE Schools develop a powerful relationship with the river by the time they graduate from SPREE. SPREE Schools also participate in special events along the river including fishing days,



service projects, and other seasonal activities. Denver's nine Premier SPREE Schools are: Fairview, Gilpin, Grant Ranch, McKinley Thatcher, Palmer, Polaris, Southmoor, Steele, and Teller (all of which are K-5th grade)

The partnership, called SPREE Force, began two years ago as a natural blend of FREF's school-based 'Keep It Clean' campaign supported by Denver Department of Public Works campaign to reduce non-point source water pollution in Denver area urban waterways, with Greenway's SPREE program that promotes and sponsors home-based environmental initiatives aimed at "keeping the South Platte River clean from drain to stream".

The joint effort sprang from SPREE's wish to extend its environmental education efforts in elementary schools beyond a single field trip per school year and FREF's practice of multiple sequential educational contacts and their expertise in environmentally focused service-learning. In its first year (2008-09 school year), the program far exceeded its recruitment expectation of 150 youth; over 900 youth enrolled in the program. Most missions are carried out during after-school hours and therefore require parental/guardian support and involvement. This format is ideal for influencing sustained



What Makes Partnerships work?¹

Effective partnerships typically have the following characteristics:

- * shared leadership, responsibility, and oversight;
- * young people are full partners;
- * relationships are central
- * inclusion is intentional;
- * an appropriate balance is struck between trust building and action;
- * mutual understanding and benefits are understood;
- * vision guides structure; and
- * being attentive to planning, communication, training, orientation, and preparation.

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environmental conservation and protection behavior in the home, with the student's entire family. The hope is that the SPREE Force experience in DPS elementary schools sets the stage for ongoing progressive service-learning opportunities in middle school, where the majority of FREF's work is focused.

The students sign up to be SPREE Force Special Agents and they are given monthly secret missions to carry out in an effort to help protect their local river. In return for completing the sign up sheet and subsequent missions each student receives a special, "limited-edition" trading card. These trading cards display Chompers (the beaver), the SPREE mascot, on the front and helpful information pertinent to the mission just completed

applies FREF's six-step process and follows the standards of high-quality service-learning developed by the National Youth Leadership Council, namely:

- *meaningful service,*
- *progress monitoring,*
- *link to curriculum,*
- *youth voice,*
- *duration and intensity,*
- *and reflection.*

For each grade level the missions follow the same progression.



Themes:

Kindergarten- Nature in my Backyard

First Grade- Get Outside! Outdoor recreation/ exploration

Second Grade- Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

Third Grade- Water Conservation

Fourth Grade- Energy Conservation

Missions:

Mission 1 follows a "look at it" theme

Mission 2 an "investigate" theme

Mission 3 a "take action" theme

Mission 4 a "plan for the future" theme

Mission 5 an "evaluation and reflection" theme

Mission 6 is an interactive field trip to the South Platte River for an event celebrating SPREE Force special agents

on the back.

Before the fall of the current academic year (2009-2010), there were changes made to the way SPREE missions were structured to try and achieve greater sustainability for the program. The primary change was to create a theme for every grade level Kindergarten through 5th grade.

This structure allows for consistent themes from year to year. Missions change as individual students move from Kindergarten to fifth grade. Additionally, this stratification more appropriately tailors the missions for each grade level.

Another improvement change was to be more intentional with the order and message of each mission. The progression

The SPREE Force program not only addresses the community need to preserve the beauty and water quality of the South Platte River, it creates opportunities for children to experience the rewards of environmental education and activism during their formative elementary school years. SPREE Force believes that five to ten year-old children are powerful change agents among their peers and within their families when they are given meaningful tools and suitable platforms for environmental education and stewardship.

Making the case for Service-Learning

Here are some talking points to promote your service-learning program/efforts

Dropout Prevention and Service-Learning:²

Review of the literature have shown that service-learning is a promising strategy for dropout prevention (Billig, 2000; Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005; Bridge-land, Dilulio, & Wulsin, 2008).

Service-learning activities address various components or strategies identified as important to drop-out prevention such as

- * **engaging teaching and curricula;**
- * **connections between school and work,;**
- * **adult and student relationships;**
- * **communication skills;**
- * **and community engagement.**

What is service-learning?³




Service learning is a *teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection* to enrich learning experiences, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

What is the difference between service learning and community service?

Community service is volunteer action taken to meet the needs of others and better the community as a whole. Service-learning is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of students engaged in service, or the educational component of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled.

Overall, the most important feature of *effective service-learning programs is that both learning and service are emphasized.*

Learn and Serve Calendar

Dec.													
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5							
6	7	8	9	10	11 Paula's Leave begins (if not sooner!)	12  Hanukkah Begins							
13	14	15	16	17	18	19							
20	21	22	23	24 CDE Furlough Day *office closed*	25  Christmas * CDE Closed *	26							
27	28	29	30	31 New Years Eve CDE Furlough Day *office closed*	 New Years Day * CDE Closed *	Jan 1							

We will be calling each program in January to learn about your MLK Day service plans.

We would also like to collect success stories about MLK Day activities and successful volunteer recruitment strategies.

2009

¹ NSLC. *AmeriCorps, Service-Learning, and Community: Working to Address Community Needs and Strengths*. Scotts Valley, CA: Learn and Serve America's National Service Learning Clearinghouse, 2009.

² RMC Research Corporation. *Service-Learning and Dropout Prevention*. Scotts Valley, CA: Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2008.

³ Taken from Service Learning Communications Kit