

9 Lessons for 9/11: Engaging Youth in September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance

As we approach the 9th anniversary of 9/11, we are challenged to explain the significance of the event to America's young people – many of whom have no first-hand memory of the occasion. Youth Service America, the official youth partner of the September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance, offers its experience in engaging youth by suggesting the following nine lessons from the event and related ideas for service-learning projects:

1. People came together to rebuild community.

■ Local Oral Histories

Interview local community members to collect and record oral histories about this day, based on their personal recollections. Prepare memory books to share the information you have collected with your local historical society or public library.

■ Main Street

Meet with local business owners to learn about the history of "Main Street" in your community. Plan a "spiffin' up" event, working together with the business owners and the Chamber of Commerce to clean up litter, remove graffiti and plant fresh flower planter boxes along the street.

2. We became more aware of difference and more committed to understanding diversity.

■ Cultural Heritage Fair

Learn about the history of immigration in your community or town. Organize a youth cultural heritage fair, inviting youth from different traditions within your community to share their culture and cuisine.

■ Community Accessibility

Research the history of the Individuals with Disabilities Act to understand the difficulties that the elderly and people with disabilities may have in accessing public areas. Work with the Parks Department to modify an existing community garden or park, or to create a new garden that is accessible to all by constructing and installing ramps at strategic locations.



3. We grew to understand anew the importance of meeting basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter.

■ Emergency Care Packets for the Homeless

Find out about homelessness in your community by contacting local homeless shelters and organizations. Solicit donations and create emergency care packets for a homeless assistance organization.

■ Gleaning Vegetables

Explore the issue of hunger and its impact on many members of your community. Contact local farmers and ask if you and your friends can collect and remove left-over produce from their fields to donate to a local food bank.

4. The event generated a renewed patriotism and commitment to democracy.

■ Honoring Veterans

Meet with American war veterans in your community, and ask them about their experiences serving our country. Plan a special event to honor the veterans, and invite the community.

■ National Guard

Learn about the history of the National Guard in your state. Coordinate personal care kits, collecting and packaging items to send to members of the National Guard from your state who are currently serving overseas.

5. We were linked to and embraced by a global community.

■ The GLOBE Schools Network Project

Join this online international network designed to connect students worldwide in sharing research with other students and with an international scientific community. Investigate rainfall amounts and temperature in your community, and upload your data to learn how humans impact rainfall and temperature.

■ Hunger Banquet

Research global poverty and world hunger, as well as hunger in your own community. Organize a “hunger banquet” to share what you have learned with other youth and community members.

6. People supported one another with random acts of kindness and goodwill.

■ Books on Tape

Practice your reading speaking skills by reading books onto tape for seniors, for the visually impaired, for students with special needs, and for preschoolers or young children.

■ Senior “Prom”

Plan and coordinate a social afternoon for seniors at a local senior center, learning about social and emotional elements of a healthy lifestyle for all ages.



7. We emerged with a new fervor for and focus on a better future.

▪ Community Forum

Investigate a community problem in your city or town, and organize a community forum on that issue, being sure to include young people on your panel. Invite the media, and share the information with local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups.

▪ Go Green

Learn about the environmental impact of energy use and explore ways in which individuals and organizations can reduce their energy consumption. Conduct an energy audit of your school, community center, library or senior citizen center, and share ways to reduce energy use.

8. Everyday acts of service can be heroic.

▪ Play On

As you learn to play an instrument or to sing, plan to share your musical talents with others by providing free lessons or a concert at a local school, community center, or senior center.

▪ It's All in the Game

Share your love of a sport by volunteering at a daycare center, organizing a sports activity for the children and teaching them the rules of the game.

Visit our websites

www.YSA.org

www.GYSD.org

www.GetUrGoodOn.org

www.GoToServiceLearning.org

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Youth Service America

1101 15th Street, Suite 200

Washington, DC 20005

202-296-2992



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9. We remember the many who answered the call to serve that day, when we encourage others to serve our communities today.

▪ Volunteer Opportunities Guide

Investigate the history of volunteerism in your community. Partner with your local community volunteer network organization, to create a brochure or web site which outlines the many different things that kids of various ages can do to help your community.

▪ Are You Ready?

Use the internet and interview local experts to find out about plans that your community has in place for disaster preparedness and safety. Using this information, create and share a school or personal family emergency plan.