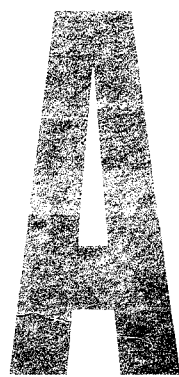


Service and Growth for Teenagers—and Grown-ups!

How a Small Academy Organized a Successful Service Program

BY JOYCE HAMER



anne Sturtevant and Ann Marie Leonard are avid readers. Ann Sturtevant is young and has seeing eyes; Anne Marie Leonard is older, and has been blind since birth. These two friends read together, lunch together, walk together, and do errands together. They were brought together

by Greater Boston Academy's Community Service Program.

Like GBA, many schools are adopting community-service programs for their students. *Newsweek* writer Katrine Ames reports:

As public funding falls short for everything from libraries to after school programs, and as the traditional volunteer pool—i.e., housewives—shrinks, teenagers (as well as senior citizens) are the logical next wave of helpers. Many school systems now require community service, and teenage volunteerism may soon become part of the national agenda. The U.S. Senate has passed a youth-service bill that the House is now considering.¹

Benefits of the Program

A school-based community-service program can captivate the mind, the heart, and the hands of its students. The students' minds are stimulated when they see the themes they study in English, social studies, and Bible actually become reality. Their hearts are engaged through journal writing and meditation, school worships, and small group discussions. Their hands are utilized as they perform service activities for four hours each week.

The community-service program at Greater Boston Academy, a small Adventist academy in Stoneham, Massachusetts, began several years ago when Joelle Andre, an English teacher, and Barbara Bing, an academy board member, recognized that the faculty and board needed to cooperate more fully to ensure the spiritual and the academic well-being of the students. They realized that the dedication of the parents and the students was needed, too.

But how could they overcome the problem of overworked parents and a "me-oriented" generation of comfortable teenagers? Through prayer and study, they adopted the following mandate:

For brethren, ye have been called

unto liberty; only use not liberty for an

occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Galatians 5:13, 14, KJV).

The academy established a community governance program with the assistance of Robert Howard, educational consultant in moral development. Teachers, school board members, parents, and students worked together on the aims and goals.

The community governance program seeks to promote the moral, social, intellectual, and emotional growth of



Integrating academic skills into the program made it easier to fit in the schedule. As part of their weekly assignments for English, Bible, and social studies, the students wrote and meditated about their service experiences. The English teacher and the coordinator of the CSP reviewed students' journals. In essence, the program became a laboratory for English and Bible.

Implementation

After refining the philosophy of the program and defining its objectives,¹ the coordinators held many planning sessions to ensure that staff members understood the program. Student orientation took place in core group meetings with the staff.

Next on the agenda was the field of service. Should it be local or more inclusive? It was decided that the whole Boston area would be included. Susan Duenas asked the United Way and the Red Cross to supply a list of organizations that needed volunteers.

In January 1988 a service workshop launched the program. The students had their choice of eighteen 35-minute orientation workshops ranging from the Guardian Angels to the Samaritans. Following the workshops, students, faculty, and guests interacted with a panel of speakers from the American Red Cross, the Kingston House shelter, and New England Memorial Hospital. The session ended with a luncheon in the library for the guests, faculty, and student leaders.

Placing Students

Individual interviews, a spiritual gifts assessment, a career objective test, and a volunteer profile helped to ensure that students were placed in jobs that matched their interests and the requirements of the agencies. The academy faculty and three volunteers from the community served as sponsors. They communicated with the agencies and chauffeured the students to their destinations. During the first year students worked with 23 organizations in the Boston area.²

The coordinator soon discovered that a bimonthly schedule did not provide the necessary continuity to keep the program

students. It trains young people to follow the example of the Saviour as described in Mark 10:45: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (KJV).

Worthy aims! But implementation presented serious problems, such as the following:

- *A lack of funds in a school already operating at sacrificial levels,*
- *The need for a paid full-time coordinator, and*
- *The integration of another element into an already busy program.*

The school needed a miracle—and

they got one at exactly the right time. Roger Heald, M.D., chairman of the school board, introduced one of his patients, Bob Williams, a local businessman, to Joelle Andre, now principal and Barbara Bing, currently development director. The school staff members shared their ideas with Williams, and he agreed to fund the project.

The school chose as coordinator Susan Duenas, who lived on Cape Cod and had been serving as an administrative assistant at the school while her two children finished academy. Joleene Barren, who worked at New England Memorial Hospital, took her place.

running smoothly. The next year the program was rescheduled on a weekly basis. This worked out much better. Communication between students, organizations, and leaders flowed more freely.

Voluntary or Mandatory?

One of the most important changes in the program evolved from student input. Initially, community service was designed as a mandatory component of the overall school program. However, students contended that making service mandatory would not cultivate a spirit of service but a spirit of obligation. In the community meeting they lobbied for a measure urging the GBA board to reconsider the mandatory status of the program. The board agreed, and the community-service program became a voluntary part of the school curriculum. Even though it is not required, participation has always exceeded 90 percent.

The English and Bible teachers dedicated each Wednesday's class time to service as an out-of-classroom laboratory. Volunteers packed peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches, as everyone learned more about the moral imperatives of the gospel commission.

As part of the global extension of the Community Service Program, the school began sponsoring a yearly Maranatha project in Mexico. During the first year, 1988, 15 students and 10 faculty members went to Nuevo Morales to help build a church. The second year, a group went to Pericotepec, and this last year they went to Oaxacal.

In order for a small academy to maintain such a large program, the people who participate have to grow into their responsibilities. The coordinator encouraged and evaluated this growth through the students' journals. Each week the students are given a text, situation, or quotation to write about. Here is an example of a journal assignment:

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4, NIV).¹

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:13, 14, NIV).

1. Describe what you did today.
2. As you consider the above quotes,

describe your relationship with GBA and service.

In response to the above assignment, a 17-year-old junior wrote:

These Bible texts make me feel so grateful to a school that includes service as

part of the regular curriculum. When I was young I was always told to help my neighbor. But when and where was I supposed to do it? Thankfully, my school gives me the opportunity to do this. Service should be done for everyone. I feel like I'm here

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE PROGRAM

GOALS

- Develop a community characterized by justice, fairness, caring, and concern for the development and well-being of other community members.
- Develop a value of the GBA community and the greater community and an integration and identification with them.
- Develop shared expectations or norms and a feeling of ownership, rights, respect, and responsibility.
- Promote the personal development of students and staff.

PROGRAM

THE CORE GROUP

- Meets twice weekly in small, informal groups of students with an advisor.
- Builds community by creating feelings of trust and belonging.
- Develops skills such as public speaking, assertiveness, and active listening.
- Discusses community issues prior to meetings.
- Discusses social and moral dilemmas.
- Presents and opportunity to take the per-

spective of other group members and to have their own reasoning challenged and supported.

THE AGENDA/FAIRNESS COMMITTEE

- Meets biweekly or as needed.
- Sets agenda for community meetings.
- Empowered to enforce decisions.
- Decisions can be appealed to the community.

COMMUNITY MEETING

- Meets biweekly to establish policy and programs for the school through participatory democracy.
- Involves entire staff, student body, and representatives of GBA parents and board.
- Chaired by members of the student association. Minutes are recorded by the secretary of the student association.
- Staff members are advocates of their own positions and for the community.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Enhances spiritual growth.
- Stimulates moral development.
- Fosters cooperation.
- Promotes service for others.
- Involves students and staff.
- Incorporates spiritual gifts and potential career choices.

on this earth, not for myself, but to help others. The program here has helped me to be more unselfish and to give more of myself away freely.

Before returning the journals, Joleene Barren, administrator of the program, includes a message to each student, commenting on their observations and encouraging them.

Evaluating the Program

Frequent letters and phone calls keep the agencies and the school informed. At the end of each semester the agencies evaluate the students, the students evaluate the agencies, and the coordinators evaluate the whole program. At the close of each school year, agencies, sponsors, students, and volunteers are invited to a program and luncheon. Everyone receives a certificate of appreciation for a job well done. The celebration marks the end of the school year's service program and points the students to a lifetime of service.

Service and Growth

The CSP has made students and faculty members more aware of needs in the community. But it has also reached out into the community for help in operating the program. Without the people who come and go without recognition, the CSP could not function smoothly—and in many cases would not function at all. These volunteers come from the church, the hospital, and the outside community. They drive, sponsor, make peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches (having become known fondly as the Peanut Butter Brigade), and provide homemade desserts for the lunches. Many members of the church and community give generous financial donations. Indeed, service to the greater community *by* the students is made possible by service *to* the students from the community.

A Reciprocal Arrangement

The witness of GBA's serving students has reached both the needy and the representatives of the agencies. In turn, the agencies have made donations to the school to show their appreciation for what the students have done. Lasting relationships have been established with many agencies. Included in this outreach are church members as well as local merchants, all working together for humanity.

Academy student assists in the physical therapy department at New England Memorial Hospital.

Conclusion

From the vision and scriptural call to service to the relationship of two unlikely people experiencing the world through seeing and blind eyes, the miracles have continued to flow for Greater Boston

Academy's Community Service Program. One student summed it up well in her weekly journal:

These are people who realize everyone is equal and no one is lower than anyone else, just because they may need more help or care. It takes courage to go to some of these places because most of us have been sheltered all of our lives. It makes us thankful for the things that God has given us and makes us want to share them with those less fortunate. When we give of ourselves to others around us, the natural outcome will be spiritual growth and the blessings are on those that give and those that receive.

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Philosophy

- A. A belief that God created humanity to enjoy continuous development of the mental, physical, spiritual, and social powers He has given.
- B. The Creator is vitally interested in the destiny of all people.
- C. It is the purpose of Christian education to restore in humanity the image of the Creator.

Objectives and Goals

- A. Enhance spiritual growth.
- B. Stimulate moral development.
- C. Encourage intelligent individual choices.
- D. Meet standards of literacy and civic understanding.
- E. Emphasize self-discipline, goal setting, and achievement.
- F. Prepare students for a lifetime of service.
- G. Develop a respect for the talents and uniqueness of others.
- H. Stimulate intellectual curiosity and creativity.
- I. Foster cooperation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. "Kids With Causes," *Newsweek* (Summer/Fall 1990), Special issue, p. 64.
2. First-year organizations: Amnesty International, Angel Memorial Hospital, Animal Rescue League, Boston Children's Museum, Boston Food Bank, Boston Van Ministry, Casamerna, Computer Museum, Country Life Vegetarian Restaurant, Easter Seals, Edgewood School, Hillside Nursery School, Legal Advocacy Resource Center, Melrose Council of Aging, Melrose Rest Home, New England Aquarium, Project S.O.U.P., Robin Hood School, Riverdale Animal Hospital, Strawberry Mill Day Care Center, and Shriner's Burn Institute.
3. Texts marked NIV are from *Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright ©1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.