

IFLA 2008: Navigating with Youth Satellite Meeting

Take it to the Next Level- Incorporating Service Learning into Teen Services Presented by Danielle King Orange County Library System, Orlando, Florida

Abstract:

Service-learning, a method by which teens learn and develop skills through active participation, provides teenagers with important skills such as leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving. This approach incorporates structured time for youth's reflection, thinking and discussion of their experiences, provides the use and knowledge of real life skills, extends learning into the community and fosters a sense of civic responsibility. With this ideal in mind, the Orange County Library System will demonstrate to other libraries how to incorporate service-learning practices by offering teen programming, clubs and volunteer opportunities.

Full Text:

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Take it to the Next Level
Incorporating Service Learning into Teen Services

Presented By:
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Hello, my name is Danielle King and I am an Assistant Branch Manger for the Orange County Library System (OCLS) in Orlando, Florida. Today I am going to discuss “Take it to the Next Level- Incorporating Service Learning into Teen Services”. With the population of teens growing every year, libraries need to develop strong teen services. Libraries should not be fearful of this population increase, but should embrace it as an opportunity to provide meaningful and educational learning experiences to the young adult population. By offering services that work with teenagers, libraries and teens will both benefit. During this presentation, we are going to discuss how you can implement your own service-learning based teen programs. We are going to use Orange County Library System’s Teen Library Corps, or TLC program as a basis for discussion. We will first look at the definition and the importance of including service-learning in the

volunteer program and how you can take volunteering to the next level by offering opportunities and programs where you work with teens, not just for teens.

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What is Service Learning?

- According to the National Service Learning Clearinghouse- Service Learning “is a method where teens learn and develop skills through active participation and provides teenagers with important skills such as leadership, teamwork, critical thinking & problem solving.”
- Offers youth reflection, thinking and discussion time
- Provides use of real-life skills, extends learning into the community and fosters civic responsibility

According to the National Service Learning Clearinghouse, service-learning is a method where teens learn and develop skills through active participation and provides teenagers with important skills such as leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving.¹ Although there are many different interpretations of service-learning, the core concept that is agreed upon is that “service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity changes both the recipient and the provider of the service.”² This approach incorporates structured time for youth’s reflection, thinking and discussion of their experiences, provides the use and knowledge of real life skills, extends learning into the community and fosters a sense of civic responsibility. With this as our basis, the teens in the TLC program develop a positive attitude about community service and the library, while developing skills that they can use in the future and earning community service hours for school and scholarships.

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What is TLC?

- Volunteer program for teens
- Goal- promote Service Learning & lifelong Library use
- Teen Voices - Speak up, Speak out! That's what Teen Voices is all about!
- Plan programs, make suggestions about services and discuss teen issues

give back a little tlic to your library & community!
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Teen Library Corp

The Teen Library Corps, which is an Urban Libraries Council/Highsmith award winning volunteer program, consists of a variety of volunteer opportunities for teens. TLC began in 2003 with the initiation of Teen Voices, a teen advisory board that gives young adults a chance to speak up. Members meet once a month to plan programs, make suggestions about teen services, and discuss teen issues at the library. This is an exciting collaboration where everybody wins. Teens have the opportunity to say what kind of activities they want to see at the library, and library staff gets first-hand information allowing them to deliver programs that interest teenagers. Furthermore, teens take an active role in planning the events. Every event and initiative that is planned for teens at the library is shared with this group before it is implemented. Once this information is discussed, Teen Voices develop specific programs to plan and deliver. For instance, the Teen Voices group implemented OCLS' first Teen Summer Reading program with an independent series of events for teens, with its own name, logo and brochure. They brainstormed ideas, picked programs to focus on, and planned events based on the theme. The Teen Voices divided the responsibilities of the programs among its members and chose group leaders to make sure that all of the other members were doing their part. This type of project represents the value of service-learning; the teens were able to learn skills that it takes to work as a team when there is a goal and a deadline. Since the success of the first summer reading program, Teen Voices members look forward to the planning and developing of the summer theme and programs.

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Program Aide

- Assist with children/teen programs
- Assist with library duties
- Work on special projects
- Earn volunteer hours for school/scholarship




Following the success of Teen Voices, teens wanted to get more involved in the library. As a result, the Program Aide position was created. As a Program Aide, teens can volunteer at the library on a regular basis based on their schedule. The teens help with children's and teen programs, assist with library duties, and have opportunities to work on special projects that they develop for the library. The Orange County Library System now has more than two hundred active teen volunteers enrolled as Program Aides earning on average between 100-450 hours per month, per location. Just in 2007, the teen volunteers earned over 8,100 hours and assisted in over 260 programs. One of the most valuable outcomes is that teens want to be involved in TLC even after they completed their school requirements for community service hours. They want to come to the library because they know that their opinion is respected, their voices are heard, they make important contributions to children's and teen programming, they spend time with teens with similar interests, and they have fun. Consequently, several long term teen projects and clubs have been established by TLC Program Aide members.

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Animanga

- Club for teens, by teens
- Teen developed activities & contests
- Trusting atmosphere where teens feel respected & worthy




One of the most popular teen clubs at the Orange County Library System was started and developed by a member of TLC as a special project. One teen was interested in starting an anime and manga club. She came up with the idea to start Animanga, a club that meets once a month where young adults could meet and discuss Japanese entertainment, literature, and culture. The teen that started this project coordinates and comes up with activities for the Animanga meetings. During the meetings, other club members give her suggestions on activities and discussion topics that they would like to pursue in future meetings. Staff liaisons attend the meetings to supervise and be available when the teen coordinator or other members need assistance. One activity they planned was the Animanga Reality Contest, a manga and comic book drawing contest where teens created their own character or comic strip. The club came up with the rules and regulations of the contest, and planned the party to recognize the winners. This type of project creates a trusting atmosphere where teens feel respected and worthy. They have a chance to show off their talents through the creation of educational and fun programs that benefit many teens.

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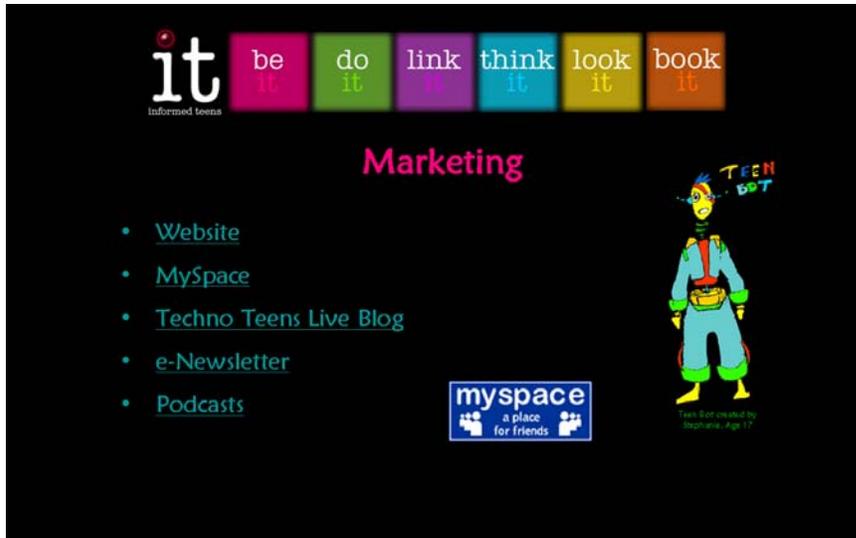


The slide features a black background. At the top, there is a logo for 'it informed teens' with the word 'it' in white and 'informed teens' in small white text below it. To the right of this logo are seven colored squares, each containing a verb: 'be' (pink), 'do' (green), 'link' (purple), 'think' (blue), 'look' (yellow), and 'book' (orange). Below these squares, the word 'pARTz' is written in a pink, stylized font. To the left of the text is a yellow clapperboard with a black and white striped top bar. The clapperboard has 'pARTz' written in red on it, and 'DATE SCENE TAKE' written in small white text at the bottom. To the right of the clapperboard is a list of activities in green text:

- Performing Arts Club
- Develop scripts & design sets
- Host & perform at library events
- Write and record podcasts
- Write and film library commercials

Another teen-initiated project evolved into pARTz, a teen performing arts club. Teen Voices and several Program Aides started this venture as a Teen Mystery Night for the summer reading program. The teens developed the theme, the characters, and the plot. One teen in particular took on the task of writing the entire script based on the ideas from the other group members. The teens met several times a week over the summer to perfect their performance before the show. The event was such a success that the teens wanted to continue to work on performing arts programs. As a result, pARTz was created and teens now have the opportunity to develop scripts, design sets, and perform at various library events.

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With all of these teen initiated programs and projects, marketing becomes imperative to success. OCLS uses a variety of marketing strategies to target the teen audience including partnerships with community organizations, schools, clubs, word of mouth, and virtual tools.

The Informed Teen website has truly been a marketing tool that has helped promote the TLC program in an easy and attractive website. Teen Library Corps has a home under the Do It page of the “IT” website. From this page we can update information and provide information such as branch locations accepting TLC members, upcoming events and post pictures taken by teen volunteers.

MySpace is a fast and free way to advertise all of your library programs. Our teen MySpace accepts friends who are teenagers, authors, libraries, and literary related musicians or performers. Our teens feel free to post comments to us about past and future events.

The Techno Teens Blog provides a means of communication with teens at all times. The blog consists of topics in which the teens can discuss and post comments on teen issues. Many of our teen volunteers write the topics for the blog which provides them another service-learning opportunity. The blog has helped us reach out to the teens we don’t see everyday and encourage them to come in more often.

The e-newsletters is a monthly custom newsletter designed for teens. This e-newsletter can be accessed from our website or by free subscription via the IT website. We are able to promote monthly teen programs and special initiatives on the teen e-newsletter.

The Orange County Library System is proud to present podcasts designed for and by teens highlighting some of our popular programs in audio and video format. Teens can subscribe to a podcast feed, download a file and listen to it at any time on their computer and/or digital MP3 player. OCLS’ monthly podcasts are written, performed and recorded

by our teen volunteers which provides them with another great service-learning opportunity.

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Impact of Service Learning

- Program attendance increase
- Real-Life success stories
- Employment, scholarships, college tuition



Since the inception of Teen Library Corps and the incorporation of service-learning, the number and quality of teen programs and their attendance have increased dramatically. Just this past summer, participation in the teen summer reading program increased 192% from the previous year. Another indication of the impact of this service-learning program are the real-life success stories of teens who have found jobs and have had accomplishments because of their involvement in the library activities. There have been several teen volunteers who have acquired jobs at the library as shelvers, circulation clerks, and even as a community relations aide because of the skills they developed by participating in the TLC program. Furthermore, several teens have earned scholarships and college tuition based upon their participation in the program.

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Service Learning Skills

- Leadership
- Self-Esteem
- Problem Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Teamwork



By incorporating service-learning techniques into library teen programming, young adults build self-esteem and confidence in their ability to solve problems, think critically, and work as a team. Consequently, it allows teens to build strong and healthy relationships with adults at the library and with their peers. The Teen Library Corps program ensures that young adults that participate in this program give back a little “TLC” to their community while they learn skills they can use in the future. Libraries should use the TLC philosophy and service-learning approach to embrace teens, and in the words of the pioneer of young adult services, Margaret A. Edwards, “let the beasts in.”³

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Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

¹ National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

² National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

³ Edwards, 87.

Bibliography

Edwards, Margaret A. *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts: The Library and the Young Adult*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1994.

Welcome to Service-Learning. “Service Learning Is.” National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. http://www.servicelearning.org/welcome_to_service-learning/service-