Short & Snappy—Learning Opportunity for Volunteers

Community Service and Take Action Plans

“Help people at all times...be friendly and helpful...make the world a better place...”

The above Girl Scout statements all reflect how Girl Scouts are committed to giving service and taking action to make the world a better place. It’s who we are!

Girl Scouts, throughout our history, have been performing community service. Juliette Gordon Low was so involved in giving back to her community that she named the first handbook How Girls can Help their Country. To this day, Girl Scouts are still known as being active community members and are taking their projects from simple community service to Take Action Plans.

While Take Action Projects vary (they vary according to a girl’s age and ability) here are a few things that we can strive for when guiding girls to take action. They will also help differentiate a Take Action Project from a Service Project:

- Take Action Projects reach a wide group of people and their effect is long lasting.
- Take Action Projects strive to identify and resolve a root cause of an issue.
- Take Action Projects have an objective “when we’re done we want this to be the result” and therefore, could be measured for success.
- Take Action Projects are done with the community and not just for the community.
- Take Action Projects are sustainable and measurable. The girls should now that what they did has a long-term effect.

Let’s look at an example of how we can take a simple Service Project and develop it into a Take Action Project:

Scenario:
A group of girls visit an animal shelter. They learn that the shelter is stretched financially, making it hard to feed and care for all the abandoned animals.

Service Projects fill an immediate need in the community. They are one-time events and have a short-term impact. Collect food for the animals (short term solutions serving only the animals that will eat the food).

To take this to the level of a Take Action Project, the girls might:

- Create an educational program which teaches the importance of pet owner responsibility. (Educates people to make smart decisions on what type of pet they should own.)
- Raise awareness of the volunteer opportunities at the Animal Shelter. Perhaps organize a recruitment/information event. (Many people now are aware of the shelter’s needs and will continue to help and advocate for them.)
Activity
1. Prior to the meeting, prepare 4-5 newsprint sheets with community service projects listed such as book drives, food drives, clothing drives, one per sheet.
2. Put a second sheet under each page and post on the walls around the room.
3. Give each person a marker and have them walk around the sheets, jotting down ideas on how this project can go from community service to take action.
4. Discuss together as a group.

Or
1. Create 4-5 newsprints with topics such as Cancer, Hunger, Skateboarders at Town Hall, Homelessness, etc.
2. Divide into 4-5 groups. Give each group one of the newsprint sheets and a marker.
3. Given 10 minutes, have them develop a Community Service Project and a Take Action Project for their topic.
4. Ask one person from each group report back to the larger group.
5. Discuss how they came up with their Take Action Project. Identify the appropriate grade level for the projects they came up with. Discuss the progression in Take Action Projects.

For more information on Take Action Projects, volunteers can take an Explore the Journey training session for Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies or Juniors.