

ServantLife Project: Change the World by Understanding Community Care!

What organizations will we work with in New Orleans? American Red Cross, Camp Restore, Contemporary Arts Center, Fairhaven Ministry of Faith, Hope & Love, Holt Cemetery, Humane Society, K-Bar-B Youth Ranch, Keep Mandeville Beautiful, New Heights Therapy Center, Northwest Carrolton Civic Association, Project Lazarus, Rainbow Childcare, Salvation Army, St. Bernard Parish Projects, St. Tammany Healthcare Alliance

What will we do? We will be partnering with local organizations that are working to improve the community by cleaning, planting, mulching, organizing and building in neighborhoods. We are only in New Orleans for one week but they are there every day so the goal is to support the work local organizations. We know that emotional, mental and spiritual health are improved when the neighborhood around us is in order. This is a *Community Organizing* type of ServantLife project. Plan to be outdoors most of the day working on community clean up projects. Local leaders will direct you in this work.

Something to think about: Does this kind of neighborhood care actually reduce crime and violence?

Scripture: *Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'*
Matthew 25:37-40

What can we do to prepare? Your project includes physical work. To get in shape, it would help you to start walking each day. It is really hot in New Orleans so over-hydrating yourself by drinking lots of water the week before you come will help too. You may want to drive around your own community and notice the difference it makes when yards and homes are cared for. Little things make a big difference.

Check out the "Broken Windows Theory" using Google. Do you agree or disagree that fixing broken windows and cleaning up the neighborhood reduces violence? Is it as simple as cleaning up the place to make the community function in healthier ways, or are there other factors that matter? Discuss this with others as you consider how you want to live out your Christian call to service. What does it take to actually get at the roots of problems in a city?

Project #83 requires an ADDITIONAL RELEASE FORM (see next page). If you are assigned to this project, YOU MUST HAVE THIS FORM SIGNED BY YOUR PARENTS BEFORE YOU COME! All release forms are available now on the gathering website www.elca.org/gathering. Using the navigation bar on the left, click on ServantLife, then on Project Release Forms.

Serving Day / Now What?

Why does this project matter? It takes money, labor and skill to keep a community in good shape. Many of the communities in New Orleans are struggling financially - expect to hear stories about local concerns. But it takes more than looking good for life to be good for people! What systems are organized in your own community that make a real impact? What systems are needed for people to move effectively from poverty to sustainability?

Now what do we do after the Gathering? Do your own Community Organizing. Learn about the real needs in your community. Are there simple things you can put in place to **really impact people's lives?** **Can you get your congregation or school involved in an effort** that is needed?

Use community organizing practices to discover how your congregation can deepen its commitment to the neighborhood. Listen in your community!

Gather demographic information about the community. Analyze demographics from the ELCA Department of Research and Evaluation, community planning boards and other sources.

Gather psycho-graphic information through one-on-one listening, community surveys or Town Meetings. Begin listening with groups already meeting at the church such as AA or pre-school parents, AARP or civic groups.

Identify critical conversations to have in the community including local people, high profile people, local merchants, realtors, police, school officials and counselors, politicians, social service institutions, other religious leaders, etc. Questions may include:

- How has the community changed while you have been living here?
- **What are some of the community's issues? What are some of the unmet needs?**
- What are the strengths of the community?
- What is one good idea for the church to serve the community better?
- Study scripture. Read Mark 2:10-11, Luke 10:38-42, Matthew 14:28-29 & John 13:34-35
- Organize information and report back to the congregation.

On Your Serving Day: BRING WORK GLOVES!!! Bring your release form if you are assigned to Project #83: Salvation Army.

What should you wear to serve? Wear your Orange ServantLife t-shirt, shorts, (no skirts, please.) Closed foot shoes are required. Wear and bring your sunscreen.

Bring a refillable WATER BOTTLE. Your project includes quite a bit of outside time so drink water before you come. Make sure your water bottle is full before you leave your hotel. Lunch will be provided but eat breakfast!

The Launch: You will ride a bus to your project. (EXCEPT #45) Check out your launch site in advance so you know where it is. Get there on time—not early and not late! Get ready the day before by estimating your walk time, filling your water bottle, getting your orange shirt & shoes organized, etc. Plan to eat breakfast because it will be a long day. Please show up! People are expecting you.

** Project 45: NO BUS—Walk to Contemporary Art Center, 920 Camp Street, arriving at 9:30 am