Evaluative Paper

Summer Leadership Adventure

by

Denise Retzleff
Professor
Department of Youth Development
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Fond du Lac County

November 2003

Published by
Department of Youth Development
Abstract

Summer Leadership Adventure, a program to encourage volunteerism by young people, has been held for one week in the summer for three years. Twelve to fourteen year-olds take part in a variety of leadership training and service projects. Participants developed or increased their leadership skills, increased their awareness of community volunteer needs, understood the importance of volunteering, and developed or increased their confidence that they can make a difference.
Situation

Karen Pittman, Senior Vice President of the International Youth Foundation says, “Young people want to be engaged in their own development. They want to be fully participating in their communities.” The 1998 Primedia/Roper National Youth Opinion Survey, reports that approximately one-third of young people in grades 7-12 identified "working for the good of my community and country" and "helping others or volunteering" as very important future goals. This is verified by Independent Sector that reports thirteen million teens, more than half of America's teen population (59%) volunteered in 1995. They gave an estimated 3.5 hours per week, totaling 2.4 billion hours of volunteer time.

The desire for youth to be engaged in their own development, to make a difference in their communities and to develop life skills in the process was further emphasized in the 1999 University of Wisconsin Extension Trends Analysis Report that stated, “Most young people want to contribute to constructively shaping and improving the world around them, but often don’t know what the possibilities are or where to start. UWEX can provide for youth and adults the needed training and resources on citizenship, leadership, service learning, youth/adult partnerships and group process skills.”

The 1999 Fond du Lac County Needs Assessment Survey indicated that youth need opportunities to be involved in decision-making and taking responsibility. Youth need to feel wanted and to feel like they make a difference.

Summer Leadership Adventure provided opportunities for youth to make a difference in their community and to contribute to the world around them while developing leadership skills.
Objectives

Youth will…

- develop/increase leadership skills
- increase awareness of community volunteer needs
- understand the importance of volunteering
- develop/increase confidence that they can make a difference.

Methods

Fond du Lac is one of four counties involved in the Northeast Urban Initiative. The goals were to incorporate new or expanded out-of-school delivery and participation modes, collaborate with other community youth organizations, reach new diverse audiences in grades three to eight (with a focus on urban youth who were not 4-H members), and integrate on-going 4-H programs into urban 4-H youth efforts.

Summer Leadership Adventure was an opportunity to build both the spirit of volunteerism and leadership skills while reaching these new urban audiences. Over the last three years of the program it has attracted young teens (age 12-14), most of whom were not current 4-H members. The maximum annual enrollment possible for the program was 17 youth. There were 15, 16, and 15 youth enrolled in the program in 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively. There were six and four repeat participants in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

Adapting the Summer of Service model outlined at a Detroit North Central Region Urban Conference session, the UW Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent and Boys and Girls Club Teen Program Coordinator collaborated on planning, implementing and evaluating of the weeklong Summer Leadership Adventure.
The new adapted program, taught from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. focused morning sessions on learning and practicing leadership skills and afternoons on active volunteerism. Leadership training included discussions, short lectures, role-plays, videos, small group work, and challenge activities. Volunteer sites included nursing homes, American Red Cross, horse program for riders with disabilities, homeless shelter, arboretum, state hiking trail, youth group sites, and Salvation Army. On the Friday of the program, participants spent the day at the water park as a celebration of their full commitment to the program and of the community work they had accomplished.

Initial planning used the Program and Activity Assessment Tool (Zeldin, Shepherd, Day, Trisha & Matysik, Greg; University of Wisconsin Extension, 2001) to insure that the essential experiences and best practices of positive youth development were integrated into the program. These included opportunities for participants to explore new skills and reflect upon their application, contributing to the community, developing new friendships, meeting established behavior guidelines, and accessing community resources.

Letters of request and grant applications were written, and presentations were done to receive $1750 from six sources to help fund this program. Participants paid $20 to attend. Several youth received partial or complete scholarships. Costs for the program included food, admission to the water park, mileage, printing and paper, 3 ring binders, insurance, and supplies for educational programming.

Evaluations for the program included daily feedback from participants on each leadership topic and volunteer experience, evaluation from the host volunteer site, an end of week overall evaluation, and a ten month follow-up evaluation.
Results

Objective 1: Youth will develop/increase leadership skills

Over the three years of Summer Leadership Adventure (SLA), leadership topics have included teamwork, self-understanding, decision-making, communication, understanding personalities, stress management, getting along with others, and building trust. The majority of youth agreed or strongly agreed to an increased understanding of these leadership skills, and whether they would use that skill in the future (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Evaluation statement followed by selected comments (in italics) from the youth about what they learned or how they will use the information.</th>
<th>Percent that agreed or strongly agreed</th>
<th>n=</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2001 | I have increased my understanding of teamwork.  
To think out of the box.  
To listen and consider other options.  
Listen to everyone and give everyone a chance.  
Teamwork is something I will use in the future.  
I will use the games about teamwork in my youth group.  
I am in a lot of activities and sports and you need teamwork.  
I will use teamwork in school, when I volunteer other places, and with my family. | 73% | 15 |
| 2001 | I have increased my self-understanding.  
Before you understand others you need to understand yourself.  
It is okay to compliment ourselves in a good way so it doesn’t sound like bragging.  
Self-understanding is something I will use in the future.  
I will use this when I’m sad and need to think of good things.  
I need it to know who I am.  
To feel positive about yourself in your jobs. | 79% | 14 |
| 2001 | I have increased my understanding of decision-making.  
I learned that everybody hardly agrees.  
We need to work together.  
That there are many ways you can make a decision.  
Decision-making is something I will use in the future.  
I will use decision making for example when I chose a job.  
I will use decision making when I wake up everyday.  
To brush my teeth or not to. | 92% | 13 |
<p>| 2001 | | 100% | 13 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Evaluation statement followed by selected comments (in <em>italics</em>) from the youth about what they learned or how they will use the information.</th>
<th>Percent that agreed or strongly agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of communication. &lt;br&gt; <em>It’s easier to talk than to listen.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>That you need to listen.</em></td>
<td>62%&lt;br&gt;n=13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication is something I will use in the future. &lt;br&gt; <em>To talk to my parents</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>On my job</em></td>
<td>100%&lt;br&gt;n=13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of teamwork. &lt;br&gt; <em>Each team member has their place, &amp; all are equally important.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>Everyone has to work together. No one can be excluded.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>You have to learn to trust the people around you.</em></td>
<td>100%&lt;br&gt;n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teamwork is something I will use in the future. &lt;br&gt; <em>In a job situation or in a family situation. Everywhere!</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>In the future I will have school projects with a group and will have to work together.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>I want to become a teacher or nurse and I need to have teamwork to be a better person.</em></td>
<td>100%&lt;br&gt;n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of personalities. &lt;br&gt; <em>It’s important to be who you are</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>That there are different people and that they like different things.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>Each person is unique.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>Just because nobody is just like you, you can still have fun with them.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>People have all different ways of getting things done.</em></td>
<td>100%&lt;br&gt;n=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My understanding of personality types is something I will use in the future. &lt;br&gt; <em>When meeting new people.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>I learned how other people act and I know how to respect them now.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>When it comes to respecting and not respecting someone.</em></td>
<td>100%&lt;br&gt;n=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of communication styles. &lt;br&gt; <em>There are many different ways to communicate with people</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>You have to listen as well as talk</em></td>
<td>94%&lt;br&gt;n=16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of different communication styles is something I will use in the future. &lt;br&gt; <em>I will be calmer</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>I’ll explain things more and give more details</em></td>
<td>88%&lt;br&gt;n=16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of how to manage stress. &lt;br&gt; <em>I know how to settle down when stressed.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>To control your anger</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>Concentrate on your breathing to keep calm and relaxed</em></td>
<td>94%&lt;br&gt;n=16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will use stress management techniques in the future. &lt;br&gt; <em>When I have lots of homework, final exams, etc.</em>&lt;br&gt; <em>When I am angry or stressed I can use it</em></td>
<td>88%&lt;br&gt;n=16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Evaluation statement followed by selected comments (in <em>italics</em>) from the youth about what they learned or how they will use the information.</td>
<td>Percent that agreed or strongly agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of teamwork. <em>That everyone has to contribute.</em> <em>That it takes time.</em> <em>Listen to each other</em></td>
<td>86% n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teamwork is something I will use in the future. <em>In a lot of school related activities.</em> <em>When I’m volunteering anywhere we can help each other out.</em> <em>For solving problems</em></td>
<td>100% n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of self-management. <em>I learned it is good to be relaxed</em> <em>To take time to relax your stress out</em></td>
<td>79% n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My understanding of self-management is something I will use in the future. <em>Before a test; when you wake up</em> <em>To calm myself</em></td>
<td>100% n=14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of getting along with others. <em>It is important to listen to other people.</em> <em>Not to judge people before you meet them.</em> <em>We must respect others</em></td>
<td>80% n=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of different techniques for getting along with others is something I will use in the future. <em>I would use different techniques to make friends.</em> <em>I will learn to be more talkative.</em></td>
<td>80% n=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have increased my understanding of how to build trust <em>It takes a long time to gain trust.</em> <em>To be honest</em> <em>Trust with parents is good</em></td>
<td>60% n=15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will use trust building techniques in the future. <em>To keep friends</em> <em>Don’t lie to my parents</em></td>
<td>67% n=15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Objective 2: Youth will increase their awareness of community volunteer needs.**

Youth learned about community volunteer needs because each volunteer site talked about their mission, number of volunteers, training offered and roles that volunteers filled. Youth then had hands-on experience fulfilling some of these roles. Youth rated themselves on their awareness of volunteer needs in the community both before and after participating.
in the program (Table 2). Youth could select a rating from 1 through 5, with 1 being low, 3 moderate, and 5 high. The 2001 data was collected in a different format than in 2002 and 2003, thus 2001 data is not included in Tables 2, 3 or 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of responses at each rating level before the program</th>
<th>Number of responses at each rating level after the program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth explained their awareness of the need for community volunteers by describing why they would volunteer again at a particular site or by describing what they gained from their experience. Items in parenthesis are where the youth volunteered on the day of their response to the statement.

*I learned how much people need help.* (Boys & Girls Club)
*I learned that places like this need a lot of help.* (Family Resource Center)
*I learned I can donate money or furniture or clothes there.* (Bethany House – homeless shelter)
*The knowledge of what the Red Cross truly does.* (American Red Cross)
*The prairie needs people’s help to restore it.* (Gottfried Arboretum)
*Because it is important to help others so they have fun.* (Adult Day Services)
*Because they don’t get to see stuff like that very often.* (Adult Day Services)
*I know who needs help.* (Salvation Army)
*I learned what they do for homeless people.* (Salvation Army)
*I learned how much people do to help others.* (Salvation Army)

**Objective 3: Youth will understand the importance of volunteering**

Both before and after participating in the program youth rated themselves on their understanding of the importance of volunteering (Table 3). They could select a rating from 1 through 5, with 1 being low, 3 moderate, and 5 high.
Youth explained their understanding of the importance of volunteering in the following ways. Items in parenthesis are where the youth volunteered on the day of their response.

*People/places need help. (Bethany House)*
*The need to help homeless people (Bethany House)*
*It’s a good cause (Bethany House)*
*I had fun and at the same time doing a good cause. (American Red Cross)*
*All the things we did will not only help the agency but also help everyone throughout Fond du Lac. (American Red Cross)*
*It’s important to help others who need the help. (American Red Cross)*
*Someone appreciated all the work we did. (American Red Cross)*
*It’s important to care about the earth. (Gottfried Arboretum)*
*I learned that helping someone can make a difference. (Free Spirit Riders)*
*How much I helped with just an hour of work. (Ice Age Center)*
*It was a fun experience knowing you made a difference (Salvation Army)*

**Objective 4: Youth will develop/increase confidence that they can make a difference**

Both before and after participating in the program youth rated themselves on their interest in volunteering (Table 4). They could rate themselves from 1 through 5, with 1 being low, 3 moderate, and 5 high.
Youth explained their interest in volunteering by responding to the following:

“Why I would volunteer at this site or a similar site again.” Items in parenthesis are where the youth volunteered on the day of their response.

*I liked working with the little kids.* (Boys & Girls Club)
*I love the chance to be able to help someone.* (Boys & Girls Club)
*I would volunteer again because I like doing things similar to what we were doing.* (Family Resource Center)
*Helping others was fun.* (Family Resource Center)
*I would volunteer here again because I loved working with the elderly* (St. Francis – nursing home)
*I’d like to help with blood donors or something else like that* (American Red Cross)
*I really enjoy volunteering and helping people out.* (American Red Cross)
*I will volunteer again because you feel like you are helping them out and you feel like you accomplished something.* (American Red Cross)
*I would volunteer again because it helps homeless people* (Bethany House)
*I really liked helping out the community.* (Gottfried Arboretum)
*Even if you are in long pants in 90-degree heat it feels good to give back to the community.* (Gottfried Arboretum)
*I tried my best and want to do it again!* (Adult Day Services)
*It was fun today and I would do it again.* (Adult Day Services)
*I really like horses and kids.* (Free Spirit Riders)
*I really like the idea of doing something for the environment.* (Ice Age Center)
*I love knowing I’m making someone’s life better.* (Lincoln House – elderly housing)
*I really like to work with senior citizens.* (Lincoln House)

Statements about the volunteer experience were asked of each youth each day that they volunteered. The table below indicates the percent of youth who agreed or strongly agreed to those statements. (N= 175)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Number and percent that agreed or strongly agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the role of the agency</td>
<td>158 – 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My volunteer experience was positive</td>
<td>156 – 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My role benefited the agency</td>
<td>157 – 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned about my likes/dislikes by working at this site</td>
<td>148 – 85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would volunteer at this site or a similar site again</td>
<td>143 – 82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth especially mentioned the volunteer experiences, new friends, learning new skills, and having fun as what they liked about the program by responding to the question, “What did you especially like about Summer Leadership Adventure” as follows:

**Volunteering**
- Going to the nursing home
- Making friends, meeting new people
- I thought it would be boring but I was wrong
- It was a learning process
- Helping other people
- The involvement with people and with places in the community
- It was fun to learn about leadership and help others.
- I love volunteering and want to come back.
- Learning to help
- We helped out a lot of people.

Youth were asked, “**Would you recommend the program to others?**” Over the three years of the program 42 of 44 (95%) yes responses were received with the following comments.

- It was informative
- It was a good opportunity to learn things
- It was fun
- I met new friends
- I got to meet new people, give back to the community, and the best part was it was fun.
- I learned new things!
- It was a new experience for me and I came by myself not knowing what to expect.
- It is a good way to show kids they really CAN make a difference in the community.
- It’s very exciting, fun and cheap to be in it.
- They can help others and learn something new.
- I learned that I like volunteering.
- It was an awesome experience
- I enjoyed the activities and most volunteer projects.
- It is a good way of learning
- I like this program because I like volunteering at places.
The following are other written comments from youth participants about what they gained or learned from their experience in Summer Leadership Adventure. For a greater context of the comment, they are followed by the name of the agency that the youth volunteered at on that day.

*I gained self-esteem because I realized that I am young enough to do a lot of things and I should achieve my goals while I can.* (St. Francis)
*I gained the intelligence of what happens when you get older.* (St. Francis)
*Old people can be nice or mean* (St. Francis)
*Elderly like to have fun too* (St. Francis)
*That simple things can be fun* (Boys & Girls Club)
*That if you don’t work as a team and people get mad nothing works out.* (Family Resource Center)
*I know that there is help out there* (Bethany House)
*I learned that even in Fond du Lac there can be homeless people* (Bethany House)
*I learned how to work better with my peers.* (American Red Cross)
*It made me feel good knowing I was helping someone else.* (American Red Cross)
*How and why the prairies are important.* (Gottfried Arboretum)
*That you can have fun and learn at the same time* (Adult Day Services)
*Just entertaining someone can be fun and cool!* (Adult Day Services)
*Try new things and if you fall down, get back up and try again* (Adult Day Services)
*You should respect all ages* (Adult Day Services)
*It’s important to help others different than you.* (Free Spirit Riders)
*That horses help a lot of disabled people* (Free Spirit Riders)
*I learned about kids with disabilities.* (Free Spirit Riders)
*That everyone deserves a fighting chance* (Free Spirit Riders)
*Just because you are disabled doesn’t mean you are unable to do stuff* (Free Spirit Riders)
*It teaches me a lot about life* (Salvation Army)
*No matter what never give up* (Salvation Army)
*Knowing how many people in Fond du Lac need financial help* (Salvation Army)

In each of the first two years of the program a follow-up evaluation was mailed to the participants with an addressed, stamped return envelope, approximately 10 months after the program. The purpose was to assess any lasting impact. The response rate was 42% (13 of 31 mailed). Seven youth (54% of respondents) indicated that they had been involved in community service/volunteerism since Summer Leadership Adventure in the
following ways.

**Salvation Army Church**

- Rolling Meadows Nursing Home
- Bethany House Walk
- FACT - Fighting Against Corporate Tobacco
- Bethany House Drives
- Key Club activities
- Bingo at old age homes
- Helping at brat fry

**Volunteering at St. Francis Home**

- I tried to get elected to student council. I’m an alternate.
- Teaching Sunday School
- Sorted coats at Salvation Army
- Helped with clean-up of vandalized school
- Helped with clearing of brush and planting trees.

Seven youth (54% of respondents) indicated that their level of involvement in community service/volunteerism since before participating in Summer Leadership Adventure had increased.

Twelve youth (92%) said that they believe that their participation in Summer Leadership Adventure increased their interest in community service/volunteerism.

They explained their responses as follows:

*Because now I know how much it is important to get involved in community service.*
*When I was in the program I got to see what our community needed help with.*
*I think participation is important because you may never learn things.*
*It opened my eyes to all the different volunteering opportunities.*
*It opened my eyes to what is really out there.*
*Before SLA I thought that voluntarism was great, but I never really had a chance to do it, and honestly didn’t want to. Now I want to and I’m going to!*
*It helped me see that there are shelters and homes that need help. I never really saw that before.*
*I’ve wanted to volunteer but I don’t want to go by myself.*
*It made me realize that me helping a little helps someone else a lot.*
*It helped me to understand how many things there are to do that can help my community.*
*It helped me to understand the importance of helping others.*

Ten youth, (77%) said their involvement in Summer Leadership Adventure increased their awareness of potential places to volunteer. They explained their responses as follows:

*Now I know what I can do to help out my community.*
It opened my eyes to all the different volunteering opportunities. Many different places are open. When we went to Bethany House and the Boys & Girls Club, I learned to help other people in my neighborhood. I found out about St. Francis Home through the program. I did not know that teens could help out in as many places as adults could. They gave us a list of places that needed help or possibilities where we could help. We went and helped the elderly play bingo. That was really fun. I look back now on the handouts you gave us and look at all my opportunities. I also called some phone numbers listed and from there I chose what I wanted to do.

Youth were given the opportunity to write any other comments about how Summer Leadership Adventure may have impacted or benefited them since it was over. They said:

It was a great program. I enjoyed helping out Fond du Lac and got to make friends at the same time. It made me more open minded about volunteering. It showed me many different things. It also taught me many things. Because we went to St. Francis Home I found out about it and now I go there. I learned to be more positive about volunteering, knowing that it helps someone else. It helped me with teamwork and I learned not to think of myself as much and to help other people. I learned how great it feels to volunteer. I also learned to work with people that I didn’t particularly like and how to control my emotions. It was fun.

Summary

Youth developed new leadership skills through participation in Summer Leadership Adventure. They became aware of agencies in the community, the purpose of those agencies and their need for volunteers. They understood the importance of volunteers to many of these agencies, especially since most of the agencies are charitable organizations. For clientele that use the agencies, especially when the youth worked with them such as with senior citizens, the youth saw first hand the positive difference they made. Participants felt good about the volunteer experience, increased their self-esteem, and indicated interest in future volunteering. This interest was actually acted upon as evidenced
by youth whose volunteer activities increased after participating in the program. In addition to meeting these objectives, youth had fun, met new people, and made friends.

Implications

The Summer Leadership Adventure program over the three years has indicated several implications for future volunteer and leadership skills program development:

- Guided opportunities for young people to volunteer should be offered, as it increases their awareness of volunteer needs in the community. Often youth do not know where to volunteer or do not know if a person of their age would be welcome.

- Through volunteering, people often discover their own likes or dislikes. Offering a variety of volunteer sites helps the youth understand their own volunteer interests for the future.

- Short-term volunteer opportunities with a group of other youth provide variety and fun, which may be the stepping-stone to future volunteerism by the youth.

- The positive effect of a volunteer experience upon the volunteer can be long lasting. It may instill in them both the realization of the need for community volunteers and the desire to volunteer.

- By adding leadership skill development to the volunteer experience, youth increase their confidence and ability to be effective volunteers.

These implications provide guidance for future program planning to meet youth skill development and community volunteerism needs.