



Stuff-A-Bus

This project was a countywide service-learning activity in which seven of our schools participated to collect needed items for a shelter in our area (canned goods, blankets, toiletry items, etc). Participants included three elementary schools, two middle schools, one high school, one career and technology high school, plus our community based partners -- St. Martin's Ministries, and Recreation & Parks. The campaign ran in the schools and community from Nov 27 to Dec 6. On Dec 6 a bus traveled to each school to pick up their donations. The students handed their totals to us and helped stuff the bus. The following day the bus was parked at the Board of Education office for two hours so the community at large could bring donations as well. Then the bus was taken to St. Martin's Ministries which operates a food and clothing pantry and a women's shelter. The bus was weighed before it was loaded and again afterwards. We collected 7,920 lbs. of food and blankets!

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? Some high school students visited St. Martin's Barn to see what services they offer and what their needs were. Donations of food, blankets and pillows were in dire need. Students discovered that St. Martin's not only serves our community, but two neighboring counties as well. Unfortunately hunger and poverty are with us everyday. Helping the less fortunate is always a community need in our area.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? Units were conducted in social studies classes on hunger, homelessness, and poverty. Students studied the effect of hunger on student achievement in school and on adults trying to enter the workforce. Math curricular objectives were also met as students worked with weights and measurements in relationship to the project. English curricular objectives were met as students used writing skills to make posters for the school and community and conducted research on hunger and poverty.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? The students not only studied the issue they also had time to reflect on the project as they were collecting, loading the bus, and realizing at each stop as the bus filled, how many people were going to be helped. While unloading the food at St. Martin's Ministries students had the opportunity to talk to the staff that work there and gain a better insight to the needs of the people served by this shelter. As collections grew at schools, students reflected daily on the projects impact.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students helped plan how the drive was to be conducted in their school. Student organizations were in charge of organizing the drive in their own school. They also kept records with class totals; some students counted, and some weighed the donations. Students were also responsible for packing the boxes and bags, loading the bus, and finally unloading.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? We worked with St. Martin's Ministries to identify the needs. Phone calls and a personal tour of the facility were conducted. Other community organizations became partners as collection sites for donations, such as Recreation and Parks.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Preparation began last fall and plans are underway already for next year. Our superintendent first had to approve the project, then schools were contacted to see if they wanted to participate. St. Martin's Ministries was contacted to see what their needs were. Transportation was contacted to see if the county would allow us to use a county bus and then we had to find a bus driver who was willing to donate his or her time to drive the bus.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Students learned more about poverty, hunger, homelessness, and health issues associated with poor diets. They learned to organize and advocate. They learned math skills. Most importantly, students learned how helping others helps the community in which they live. Because this was a county-wide project it showed that working together with others can accomplish great things. It can have 4 TONS of impact.

For more information on this project, contact Carol Seward at 410-754-3463 or carol_seward@mail.cl.k12.md.us.