



Summer Service Camp

By Craig Giles

In June of 2000, Carroll County Maryland Public Schools and the Westminster, Maryland Department of Recreation teamed together to sponsor a two week service camp involving middle and high school youth. The students participated in leadership training and service at various sites in the morning and early afternoon and then served as CIT's (counselors in training) with younger students in the day camp program in the afternoon. Preparation, action and reflection were emphasized with service at five local CBO's involving direct and indirect food programs, elderly populations, and local and internationally poverty relief. The Seven Best Practices (BP) of Service-Learning were incorporated into the philosophy and daily operation of the service camp experience:

Meet a recognized need in the community: Community needs were identified and met by calling well ahead and asking CBO's what they needed and being flexible enough to change plans if necessary.

Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning: Although school was out, we met curricular objectives through preparation and reflection activities which allowed students to learn about the issues of poverty, the elderly and international relief.

Reflection throughout service-learning experience: Reflection was on going throughout the experience. Student wrote, held discussion, and reflected through art and drama experiences.

Develop student responsibility: Students developed responsibility by choosing a task and sticking with it, taking and making suggestions in their role as CIT's and mentors to the younger students.

Establish community partnerships: Partnerships in the community were established and maintained through a cooperative effort with five different CBO's, all of whom thankfully asked us to please come back again.

Plan ahead for service-learning & Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service: Planning ahead for service-learning and equipping students with knowledge and skills took place throughout the projects as part of discussions of where we were going, what were we likely to experience, and what we learned.