

St. Michael's Community Center

By Katie Brooks Douglas

Best Practice 1: *Meet a recognized need in the community*

In 2003-04, I created a web quest on the internet and students researched different organizations. After all of the research, my students decided that the Talbot County United Fund was the organization that they wanted to work with. As a class, we chose this particular agency because they helped a variety of organizations in Talbot County. One organization supported by the Talbot County United Way was the St. Michael's Community Center. A lot of my students spent many hours at the community center receiving help with homework and they realized how important this service was. The students decided to raise money to support this important community program. At the 6th grade graduation ceremony, we presented the Talbot County United Fund with a check for more than \$600. As the conclusion of the project, we thought of ways to expand this project for the future.

Best Practice 2: *Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning*

Students used research, analysis, and math skills, as well as technology, as part of this project.

Best Practice 3: *Reflect throughout the service-learning experience*

Throughout the project, we stopped to reflect on what our goals were and how we could meet our goals. We kept a journal of things that went on and reactions throughout the school.

Best Practice 4: *Develop student responsibility*

Two students, who are usually very reserved and don't always stand out in academics, took charge of this project. The students wrote letters to the student body and created posters to hang around the school. In groups of four, students presented information about the coin drive, what the United Fund does and who they help, to the rest of the school. The students were in charge of collecting the coin jars in each class everyday and counting the money. The students who were project coordinators recorded this information on a spreadsheet.

Best Practice 5: *Establish community partnerships*

We worked with the St. Michael's Community Center and the Talbot County United Fund.

Best Practice 6: *Plan ahead for service-learning*

We had the Talbot County United Fund liaison speak with the classes about the St. Michael's Center and ways we could help. After that speech, we decided to have a coin drive to help raise money for the United Way and St. Michael's Center to help them reach their fundraising goals.

Best Practice 7: *Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service*

The service-learning project created awareness in the entire school about community organizations, their needs, and who they help. Last year's 5th graders are now in 6th grade and they are ready to begin their service-learning project because of all the excitement generated around last year's project.

