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PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

Thank you for your interest in taking on a service project. The success of your project will depend on many factors, but having a local volunteer who is willing to take on a leadership role is perhaps the most critical. We have created an overview of tasks involved in managing a project in your community.

1 Investigate possible service projects

Talk to members of your MSU alumni community and/or to other Spartan alumni in your area to solicit ideas for local non-profits that might be good partners for a service activity. Alumni may work in these organizations and we know that many Spartans share their time and talent on boards of local non-profits. They know these organizations well and have a good idea of which ones are well suited to a possible service activity.

Keep in mind that there is great interest in family-friendly sites, so ask about age restrictions and other limitations. If you are considering more than one project for your area, think about including both outdoor environmental sites as well as those where participants will be working directly with others, such as tutoring or serving in a soup kitchen. When scheduling your activities we encourage hosting them on dates that do not conflict with local events or religious holidays. We also suggest that you look at sites that accept a minimum of five volunteers so there will be the opportunity for a sense of a Spartan community among the participants.

2 Select your service project

You may be working with a committee or other group of interested alumni as you plan our service project. Thinking about the options to partner with a community organization as a group can be helpful and also helps to create a broader sense of ownership for the activities of our project. You should look at geography, types of projects, and capacities as you make your selections. If you are doing multiple projects, we strongly suggest that you have a Spartan alumni volunteer to serve as the coordinator or host for each one.

Here are some ideas to spark your creativity:

- Beach cleanup
- Book drive
- Boys and Girls Club cleanup
- Campground cleanup
- Cemetery cleanup
- Child ID program
- Cleaning a river
- Domestic abuse shelter aid
- Food drive
- Graffiti cleanup
- Garden maintenance
- High school beautification
- Lagoon/creek cleanup
- Landscape family center
- Landscape local church
- Maintenance
- Mural painting
- Painting public buildings
- Park cleanup
- Pet day at senior center
- Picnic table painting
- Planting urban garden
- Railroad cleanup
- Reading to children
- School supply donation
- Statue/sculpture cleanup
- Tree planting
- YWCA/YMCA cleanup
Work with service site staff regarding project details and register project on website

Ask the director of the potential community partner to outline the scope of work, list any pertinent materials and the hours of service desired. Time commitments can range from two hours of work to an entire day. Once the scope of work has been determined, you can establish volunteer capacity. Register your project on the serve website at serve.msu.edu.

It is advisable to do an in-person, on-site run through within one or two weeks of the event so that you understand the scope of work. Check to see if there is an appropriate area where the Spartan group can meet to sign in for the day and get their name tags when they arrive onsite.

Use committees to assist in planning

Start early and delegate tasks to subcommittees. Suggested subcommittees and responsibilities include:

- Volunteer recruitment
- Logistics
- Community networking
- Public relations

Volunteer Recruitment

Recruit and select volunteers for the project. These people can be involved in a variety of ways and may serve on additional committees. Members also will be charged with motivating and encouraging participation from all members.

Logistics

The Logistics committee works with the community administration, town officials and other members of the community to make sure the project runs smoothly. For example, if you are building park amenities, be sure to get plans approved.

Community Networking

This committee will encourage participation from volunteers not directly affiliated with alumni clubs. In addition, they will solicit assistance in the form of sponsorship (food donations, trash collection, signage, etc.).

Public Relations

This committee alerts the community and media about your event. Public relations involves a lot of planning, details, and follow through. Consider asking people who specialize in this area to join this committee.

Coordinate with your MSU alumni club or MSUAA engagement director

Keep in touch with your MSU alumni club so they are aware of your service project. To find your local alumni club, use the club locator map (https://alumni.msu.edu/get-together/alumni-clubs/club-locator.cfm). While the MSU Alumni Association and university will be doing mass promotion to all alumni, it is very important that your events are promoted locally as well. Your alumni club likely has communication channels in place, and you should work through them to get the word out. Alumni clubs should contact their MSU Alumni Association regional engagement director so that they are aware of your project.
6 Assist in recruiting volunteers for your project and other projects

You and your committee, if you have one, should also assist in volunteer recruitment. Spread the word to your Spartan friends. Encourage those you know to register on the serve website. If your project has a maximum number of volunteers and that number is reached, the volunteer registration function will be disabled and a message will be posted stating that the project is full.

If your project fills quickly, you might want to consider adding another one.

7 Send out a confirmation to project volunteers

You will be able to access a list of registered volunteers for your project. Volunteers need to receive a project confirmation from you that includes the following: a thank you for volunteering, the project address, directions, parking information (if applicable), what to wear and/or bring, the time and location where they should meet to register and get their assignment, and, for outdoor projects, what to do if it rains. The confirmation should also include an on-site contact name and phone number (generally the project coordinator for that site) as well as contact information for the person sending the email, if different from the coordinator.

8 Field questions from volunteers

Since the name of the project coordinator will be listed on the service website as the contact for your project, volunteers may be in touch with that person to ask specific questions or to clarify information. If a volunteer needs to change or cancel their registration, they will be advised to contact the project coordinator.

9 If possible, develop a rain plan

If your project is being held outside, discuss the rain plan with the organization contact. Often the work goes forward unless it is pouring rain, but in this case your no-show rate may be fairly high. In some cases, an indoor alternative activity such as stuffing envelopes for a mailing can be a backup. You could also try and plan for a rain date (which should be included in the online project description).
10 **Organize volunteers on the event date**

Please plan to arrive early at your project site and stay until the work is done.

You have already been in touch with the community organization director regarding your registration location and hopefully you have arranged for a table or other area where you can check in your volunteers and have them fill out MSU name tags. Don’t forget pens. Post any signage or entrance information and/or have other volunteers greet participants and help direct them to the registration area.

Direct volunteers to jobs or refer them to an on-site community partner who can direct them to work. Ensure that all volunteers have a job to do!

We know that most service programs do not have any funding, but be creative to see if you can find a way to provide water or snacks to the volunteers. Perhaps an individual or organization would be willing to support the day in this way. Sometimes, the hosting organization makes refreshments available as well.

Plan to have someone take pictures and/or video. These can be used in many ways, including uploading them in real time using the hashtag, #SpartansWillServe, emailing them to the participants after the event, or posting them on the community’s website.

11 **Organize a celebration/social gathering**

After an exhilarating day of service, you should celebrate! Invite volunteers to socialize and share stories of the day, especially if there is more than one project in your community. Some communities might plan a barbecue or let people know in their confirmation message that they should plan to bring a picnic lunch for after the service activity. Other communities might designate a centrally-located restaurant where volunteers can gather as they finish their work. It is up to you to decide how/if this will work, but we know that many volunteers really enjoy the opportunity to build on the friendships they made during the day and bask in the glow of their achievement.
PROMOTING YOUR PROJECT THROUGH THE MEDIA

We appreciate your efforts to raise awareness about your project. Once you’ve created your media list, send out your media materials and follow up over the phone with your contacts to encourage them to spread the word.

Media Relations Checklist

1. Customize the media advisory. We’ve provided you with a shell of an advisory in the toolbox at serve.msu.edu. Now, you just need to complete the advisory with your localized information (community facts, what you’re doing for an event, your contact information, etc.) and you’re ready to go! Remember, the more local the story, the more appealing it will be to the media.

2. Distribute your customized media advisory to your media list. Email is probably the best and easiest way to get your information sent out in a timely and cost-effective manner. Do not send the press release as an attachment in your email. Copy and paste the press release into the body of the email and include any additional information as an attachment. Consider a catchy subject line to make sure it doesn’t get lost in their inboxes. Be brief, get to the point, and emphasize the local angle, but don’t be afraid to be creative.

3. Make follow-up calls. After you’ve distributed your media materials, pitch your story idea to your media contacts. If you email the information, you can begin to place your follow-up calls the very next day and subsequent weeks thereafter.

4. Be efficient. When making calls to your contacts, remember:
   • Reporters, editors and producers are almost always working against deadlines, so keep your conversations brief and to the point. Unless the newspaper is an afternoon paper, the best time to reach print reporters is usually before 3 p.m. Television reporters and assignment editors are usually available to discuss story ideas between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
   • Don’t ask, “Did you receive the materials I sent?” Reporters hate this question. Try saying, “I sent you information a few days ago. I’d be happy to talk to you more and get you additional information if you’re interested.”
   • Be prepared to talk about your story. When you’ve got your media contacts on the phone, it’s a great opportunity to explain more about any events or fundraisers you’re hosting.

5. Think about what the media really want. Overall, the media love local stories — what’s happening to people in their community, how it fits into an overall national trend, what impact it has on other people in town, etc. That’s where your story will resonate the most. If you remember three things, remember these: local, local, local.

   In addition, different media outlets respond to different key points. For example, television news programs will respond to visual scenes, so make sure you send them visuals such as photos or videos to use as well. Radio stations will respond best to one-on-one interviews, so mention that you could come in for an in-studio interview or conduct a live phone interview. Print contacts usually ask for the most detail and for statistics to prove the validity of your story. Print contacts also appreciate visuals, photos, illustrations, logos, etc.

6. Realize you might have to resend the information. Newsrooms are hectic places, so don’t be surprised if your contact mentions he or she has misplaced the news release or that the materials have been routed elsewhere. Be prepared to send another copy.

7. Meet deadlines. While your contacts already have the news release, they may require additional information or want to interview you for a longer story. Always return phone calls and requests for information in a timely manner. Most publications have specific issue dates and deadlines that cannot be extended.
8. If the media respond, be ready. Read and review your message points. And remember, media relations is a lot like sales — you may have to talk to many people to close just one deal, but it’s worth it — one local story gives thousands of people an opportunity to learn more about MSU.

**Building a Media List**

To spread the word about your local program, you need to know where to begin and with whom. The best way to start is by building a media list. Here’s how.

1. Build your media list the same way you would build your professional network. Relationships are the best starting point when pitching your story. Think for a minute about who you know. Are any local media professionals MSU alumni? Do you have any contacts on staff at your hometown newspaper or TV/radio stations? Do you know anyone else who might? If so, those contacts might help you get your foot in the door. If the media professionals you contact say they aren’t the right reporter or editor, they’re usually kind enough to refer you to the appropriate person.

2. Identify the media outlets that might be interested in your story and start to make a list. Think about the following types of media that are in your town or within a radius of about 30 miles. For smaller towns, you might want to opt for a larger radius.

   - **Print (magazines and newspapers):** What is the biggest newspaper in town? Does your community/neighborhood have a smaller newspaper as well? How about a city or regional magazine that focuses on what people are doing in your community? Try to focus on the biggest media outlets in your community as well as any neighborhood publications that are close to your community.
   
   - **TV:** What are the major TV stations in town? Do they have morning or midday shows that feature interesting events or organizations in your community? Do any TV news anchors specialize in philanthropy or service, and for that reason have a natural interest in your story?
   
   - **Radio:** Your community’s project or event would make a great interview opportunity for radio morning shows. Think about the most popular radio hosts in your town. Would they be a good fit for a philanthropy or service story? What morning shows do you listen to in the morning?

3. Once you’ve identified media outlets, check each outlet’s website for contact information. Many stations list contact information for a newsroom, editor, or reporter. Search for email addresses and phone numbers to add to your list.

4. Identify the right contacts at each media outlet. Your contacts will have different titles based on media type:

   - **Print (magazines and newspapers):** Regional magazine editors, newspaper volunteer section, or philanthropy section editors. At smaller newspapers, ask for the name, phone number, and email address of the managing editor or special sections editor.
   
   - **TV:** News assignment editor, as well as the producers of the station’s morning, midday, and/or talk shows.
   
   - **Radio:** News director, producer of the station’s morning and/or talk shows. Be cautious about approaching “shock jock” stations that may not handle your news in a tasteful manner. Usually, news or talk stations are more receptive to pitches because they have more room for stories that are not timely or breaking news.
• **Online:** If the website is run by one individual, you only have one option. If you are targeting an online news site, look for someone who covers community news.

• **Note:** Do not contact the advertising department with a story idea.

5. If you can't find a particular reporter's email address or phone number on the website, start making phone calls. Ask the receptionist or newsroom contact for the correct person to approach regarding philanthropy or service. Keep records of everyone with whom you speak, and make sure to get the correct spelling of names, email addresses, and phone numbers.

6. Understand how much time ("lead time") various media outlets need when you distribute press materials to the people on your list.

   - Daily and weekly newspapers, radio stations, and television talk shows usually require about two to three weeks' notice.
   - Magazines usually prefer a few months' notice, so don't expect to see coverage right away. Since most city magazines set their own print deadlines, it's best to simply call and ask how much advance notice they require on a story.
   - Local television and news assignment editors prefer only a week or a few days' notice.
   - Online sources can post items very quickly, so send the information a few days or a week in advance.

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**Interview Tips**

If a reporter or editor is interested in a story about your program, he or she may want to interview you in person or over the phone. Interviews are a perfect opportunity to share your messages with the public, so make sure you're prepared.

**Before The Interview**

1. Get as much information as possible about the interview. Most reporters will share what they hope the article will discuss and what they hope you will bring to the story regarding your service project.

2. Know your key messages. The better acquainted you are with the messages you want to deliver, the more easily your story will flow. Don't memorize a script, but try to make the words your own. Practice answering questions in a quiet space at home or even in front of a mirror. The more you speak your key messages out loud, the more comfortable you will be when it's time to answer questions.

3. Rehearse with a fellow community member, friend, or coworker. This may sound silly, but practice with another person helps you get comfortable using the message points when you're asked questions during the actual interview.

**During the Interview**

1. Pace yourself. If the interview is for a television or radio station, ask whether the interview will be live or taped. Live interviews normally last only two or three minutes, and there is no opportunity for editing. A taped interview might last five or 10 minutes, because the reporter will have time to edit the story before it airs.

2. Think of the interview as a conversation. You can even think of the reporter as a potential new friend, but be aware that the reporter's main objective is an interesting story. Don't share anything you don't want to see in print or on television. That said, relax, the reporter isn't an enemy. He or she knows you are a volunteer and promoting your community, and might want to help spread the word.
3. Remember, the media like to tell stories in personal terms. Think about the number of people your project or event is helping, or share a story of someone who inspired you.

4. Weave key messages into your story. You can make your points most effectively when you can use your personal experiences as examples.

5. Relax and be yourself. You don’t need to pretend you have information or expertise that you really don’t. If you don’t know an answer, just say so.

After the Interview

1. Ask the reporter whether there are other facts or information he or she will need to complete the story.
2. Find out when the story will run, or for the reporter’s estimation.
3. Make mental notes about the interview — how it went and what you will do differently the next time.
4. Reward yourself for a job well done!

Additional Tips for Television Interviews

1. Know what you want to communicate, and don’t be afraid to repeat yourself. Live by your key messages.
2. Short answers are better than long ones. Stop talking when you’re done making your point.
3. This is not a confrontational interview. Why not smile while you’re talking? You’ll sound more enthusiastic.
4. Don’t interrupt the interviewer. Begin your answer when he or she is finished.
5. Speak in complete sentences.
6. Avoid jargon, abbreviations, and acronyms. Speak simply.
7. Don’t repeat a negative. For example: If asked, “Aren’t you an alien?” don’t reply with, “I’m not an alien.” You might say, “Actually, I’m from Cleveland.”
8. Keep your hands free, open, and animated. Gesture as you normally would.
9. Plan what to say if asked, “Is there anything else you’d like to say?” You should recap each of your message points as a response.
10. Always assume the camera is on.
11. Resist the urge to lean into or grab the microphone.
12. Television is an intimate medium. Speak in personal, anecdotal terms. Use analogies to illustrate your point.
13. Don’t be afraid to tell your story.
14. Body language is important for television. Practice by talking in front of a mirror. People will remember how they felt about you more than they’ll remember what you said.
15. Mention your contact information and the website where people can go for more information.
16. Remember, there is no such thing as “off the record.”
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why serve on behalf of MSU?
Michigan State University Spartans have a proud tradition of service. From the thousands of students who give back each year through the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement to the significant number of MSU graduates who enter the Peace Corps, Spartans have risen to the challenge to change the world. Many are doing just that as volunteers within the university community and in their professional lives.

To harness the power of this spirit of living, service projects bring together Spartan alumni, students, faculty, staff and friends around the world to serve their local communities. We hope our project serves as a catalyst for new service commitments throughout the year. It is just one of a number of service opportunities offered by the MSU Alumni Association and Michigan State University.

2. Who can participate? Are children welcome? What about my non-Spartan friends?
Everyone is welcome. If you are joining a group service project, any age restrictions will be noted. If you are registering as an individual but would like to have others join you, you may add their names to your registration form. Providing service to our communities is a wonderful activity for families to share. We are happy to have members of the extended Spartan community join us, so please invite your friends and family to volunteer with you.

3. I already volunteer, why should I participate?
We recognize that many Spartans are actively involved in service to their local communities. Serving through MSU is a means for alumni, students, faculty, staff and friends to come together in service. Global Day of Service is also an opportunity to participate in a historic day for Spartans that demonstrates our annual tradition of service to others.

4. Who do I call with questions about a service project?
Please contact the project coordinator listed for each service project.

5. What if there is no service project listed in my area?
If you do not see a service project listed near you there are a few options:
- Reach out to your local alumni community and volunteer to lead a service project in your area.
- Connect with a local charity or organization and register an individual volunteer service project. You’ll even be able to invite a few friends to volunteer with you.
- If your place of work supports employee service initiatives, gather your fellow Spartans and coordinate a corporate/business project.
- Keep checking for newly added projects.
- Tell us that you’d like to be notified of projects in your area, and if one is scheduled, the project coordinator will contact you.
6. What if I have an idea for a service project in my area?
After connecting with the organization, you can register an individual volunteer service project to benefit them.

7. What if the project I want to volunteer for is full?
If you feel a strong connection to a particular project that is full, please contact the project coordinator listed. Projects may have wait lists in case of cancellations, or in some cases, there may be the opportunity to expand the capacity of the project if there is enough interest. If that does not work, we hope you’ll also consider volunteering for an alternative service project in or near your area.

8. How will I get important updates about my service project?
You will receive a confirmation with the service project details immediately after you sign up to volunteer. Additional information, including specific logistical details for your project and any updates, will be communicated directly by the service project coordinator. If you have questions about a service project, please reach out directly to the service project coordinator.
CREATING YOUR OWN GRAPHICS

If you’d like to create custom graphics using your own photography and copy, consider this your roadmap to success.

**Wordmarks**
Serve.msu.edu wordmark can be found within the website toolbox. They are saved in two file formats: EPS and PNG. Feel free to use these wordmarks interchangeably within your graphics.

**Typeface and Weights:**
**Gotham Ultra and Book**
The Gotham typeface is a bold, contemporary typeface that evokes MSU’s open, forward-thinking approach to solving problems and providing opportunity.

Purchasing this typeface is optional. If you are interested in purchasing the Gotham typeface, visit [www.typography.com/gotham](http://www.typography.com/gotham)

**Font Substitutions**
When a serif font is desired for text to maximize readability, the Georgia typeface or Times New Roman may be used.

When a sans serif font is desired, the Helvetica typeface or, secondarily, Arial may be used.

**Color Palette**
Use this color palette to create a unified look and feel across the graphics you create.

Web graphics should be formatted using RGB color codes.

CMYK values are best used for print mediums.
**EXAMPLES**

Use these examples as inspiration in the creation of your customized graphics. More examples can be found in the online toolbox.

**Facebook/Instagram**

Dimensions: 1080 x 1080 pixels

![Facebook/Instagram Examples](image)

**Twitter**

Dimensions: 640 x 320 pixels

![Twitter Examples](image)