

OUTSTANDING SERVICE PROJECTS, 2005

Presented at the 2005 NHS & NJHS National Conference

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The ten winners of the 2005 OSP Awards are listed below in random order.

1. Marian Central Catholic High School from Woodstock, Illinois, for their “Penny Wars” Project.

Chapter president Natalie Benoy heard about this fun and effective fundraising idea at the National Conference in St. Louis, MO last year. The chapter decided to aid Tsunami relief efforts by donating all proceeds from the fundraiser to **Heifer International**, a charitable organization dedicated to ending hunger by providing livestock to poverty-stricken communities.

The chapter’s original goal was to raise \$250 to purchase a water buffalo to plow farms, help fertilize fields and provide high-protein milk to a tsunami-ravaged community. After 3 weeks of planning and organizing, the members put their plan into action. Every day for one week, students in each of the four classes donated pennies to that class’s respective bucket, placed in the school cafeteria. Each penny deposited earned that class +1 point. Any other denomination counted as a negative against that class. The goal was to collect as many pennies as possible in your class’s bucket while donating larger denominations to your rivals.

Marian Central’s chapter surpassed their goal of \$250 by the second day of the fundraiser and it was apparent that they were successful in involving the entire school body. At the end of the week, the Penny Wars project collected \$3800, over 15 times the original goal. Through Heifer International, the money donated was used to purchase two heifers, two water buffalos, two pigs, 4 sheep, six goats, four llamas, (a partridge in a pear tree) and other much needed livestock. Students were greatly impressed and surprised when they realized just how far their donations went and gained a new appreciation for the luxuries we sometimes take for granted.

2. Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School from Rochester, Massachusetts, for their It's in the Bag Project.

The idea for this service project came from a faculty member whose mother had received a tote bag to use with her walker and thought that making these items and donating them to a nursing home would be a worthwhile project for the members.

After their May induction this year, the chapter members decided they would not only meet the challenge of making the bags, but also fill the bags with useful items, and personally deliver the bags and visit with the nursing home residents.

“It's in the Bag” had four goals: 1) to make tote bags for nursing home residents that were useful to the seniors; 2) To share their time by visiting the recipients; 3) To bring members of NHS together as a team, both new and existing members; 4) And lastly, to involve the school in a common project in the final days before summer vacation.

With donated and personally purchased materials consisting of placemats, fabric, Velcro, the members set out to create 70 bags for all of the residents of the nursing home. Lotion, pens, pencils, notepads and candy were also donated and used to fill the bags as gift items. They had an overwhelming response from staff members, many of whom brought in their own sewing machines to help along with other items. The local community also responded. A quilt shop donated fabric and an elderly woman donated over one hundred fabric samples.

Students set up shop in the school library and bag-making sessions were held two nights after school. Students were aided by staff and parents who instructed and helped produce bags. Members of the student body also contributed during the school day, including one group of boys who worked for three class periods. The project yielded 140 bags, double the intended goal.

The chapter then delivered the bags and visited with the residents over a period of two days. On a special note, the elderly donor who contributed 100 plus pieces of fabric broke her hip and was hospitalized shortly before the project was finished. The chapter made her a special bag and paid her a visit to thank her for her generosity.

The rewards of this project were not only seeing the senior citizens enjoying themselves, but the intertwining of generations at opposite ends of the spectrum.

3. Armijo High School from Fairfield, California, for their Heroes Alliance.

The Armijo NHS has developed a teacher recognition program aimed at honoring one teacher each month in front of their peers. Ballots are distributed each October and the student body votes for 10 teachers, to be honored throughout the year. A short biography, photo and tribute to the “Teacher-of-the-month” are featured in the school newspaper.

This year, the members decided to try a different approach to supporting their teachers. Because Fairfield, California is home to Travis Air Force Base, many of the staff and faculty had relatives and friends serving in Iraq as do many students. In a joint effort with *Alliance for Heroes*, they mobilized to show support to their teachers as well as for the hometown heroes deployed in Iraq by creating care packages to be shipped overseas.

As word of the chapter’s efforts spread, the community came alive to assist. Donation bins were available in many locations – the public library, police station, and other locations around the city. Members solicited donations from local businesses and committees met weekly to monitor the progress of the project. Among the items donated were cases of paperback books from a local publishing company, boxes and shipping items from the Jelly Belly Corporation, snacks, Band-Aids and phone cards from local grocery stores and dental floss donated by a local dentist. Students and other citizens contributed stationary, cards, soap, shampoo and hand lotion.

As a result of their efforts, the chapter was able to ship 80 individual care packages and 10 boxes of supplies, totaling about 500 lbs. Donations that could not be shipped, such as hard-cover books or oversized items, were donated to a local battered women’s shelter.

The chapter received heart-felt appreciation from members of *Heroes Alliance* and praise for “the incredible young people of the National Honor Society and their efforts to mobilize the community...”

4. Sig Rogich Middle School from Las Vegas, Nevada for their Street Teens Donation.

Originally developed in the 2003-2004 school year, this project was aimed at making a community connection and assist homeless teens in the community in partnership with Street Teens, a local organization that works with homeless youth. During that year, 900 toiletry items were collected and donated.

For the 2004-2005 school year, the chapter aimed to top that. To begin, they placed decorated boxes in each classroom and created posters and publicity for the month long campaign. They organized a collection committee which oversaw the classroom collections and then sorted, counted and boxed all of the items. In addition, over 30 student volunteers assisted in the collection and sorting of donated items. Members also conducted brief presentations about Street Teens in classrooms and at home to promote the project.

In the end, the *Street Teens* project collected over 1500 toiletry items and donated them to Street Teens. It was the first school wide project of the school year and provided meaningful learning and leadership experiences for the officers and members of the chapter.

5. Springs Middle School in Bonita Spring, Florida, for their Making Magic Happen II project.

The Bonita Springs Middle School Chapter of NJHS mobilized to respond to the devastating effects of the previous hurricane season (2004) which hit Florida especially hard. The chapter chose to focus on the Charlotte County region and to distribute a \$10 Christmas/holiday Gift card from Target to every elementary school student, approximately 7,000 students.

By promoting their project through television stations, print media, district school websites and the National Conference, they were able to reach out to 20 schools in 9 states. The NHS and NJHS chapters at these schools contributed between \$30 and \$1600 each and sent a handwritten note for every \$10 they contributed. Bonita Springs sponsored several local fundraisers and the chapter contributed \$2400 to the fund, bringing the total to \$7500. Students delivered the gift cards at a Christmas party where they met and brightened the day of hundreds of children affected by hurricane devastation.

6. Bixby High School of Bixby, Oklahoma, for their Mommy's Day Out project.

Members of the Bixby NHS took on the task of providing safe, fun childcare for children while their parents completed Christmas shopping last year. They organized a fun day filled with fun physical and mental activities for children in the school gym.

Officers met first to brainstorm activities and sponsorship ideas. They then presented the idea to the membership, who enthusiastically supported the project. The chapter invested over 600 hours in the planning and execution of the project. 150 members donated time, supplies and equipment to this effort. Word of mouth spread as the day approached and students from other schools participated with the children as well.

Mommy's Day Out was a success with 85 children and their parents in attendance. Members worked throughout the day and most stayed beyond their scheduled time. Parents were undoubtedly very appreciative to these students for their hard work and the free time this day provided in their busy lives. The day would not have been such a great success without the planning and enthusiastic support of the members of the chapter, school and community.

7. Monroe County High School in Monroeville, Alabama, for their Mission Impossible? Operation Holiday Joy.

The chapter at Monroe sponsors a service project each month of the school year. Some of the projects are done independently and others are done with the rest of the student body or the community. The members decided to reach out to soldiers stationed in Iraq. In 2003, they sent Christmas packages to the Army's *82nd Airborne*. This year, they wanted to reach members of the local community serving abroad. They learned that a 2003 alumnus of the school had just arrived in Afghanistan with the *1st Platoon, India Company* of the U.S. Marines. After learning that many of the marines did not receive regular mail from home, they set out to send care packages to this platoon.

The Membership divided into several committees designated to solicit support from local businesses, publicize the project in the local media, involve students from other schools and establish a timeline for donations, beginning in early November 2004. Members learned from the soldier's family what items were most needed and could be easily shipped.

The resulting local media blitz generated quite a buzz in the community of 7,000 and soon donations were being gathered in Sunday school classes, and a local community college delivered collections of their own. Chapter members then made "Thinking of You," Christmas and Hanukkah cards to accompany the packages.

After sorting and packing 15 crates of items, they loaded them into 3 SUVs and set out to ship the packages. Part of the \$362 shipping bill was picked up by the Alabama River Pulp Companies, Vanity Fair Corporation, a local attorney, and the chapter members and their families.

Members continue to feel personal gratification for making a difference in the lives of this platoon and bringing a little bit of home to them.

8. Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, **Illinois**, for their Give-A-Thon project.

Give-A-Thon began 21 years ago with 12 Stevenson students who hosted a telethon and gathered donations from the school body to support a local family in need through Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Since then, the program has expanded to include over 4,500 students, 400 teachers and more than 250 sponsored families.

Give-A-Thon found a home and annual sponsorship with the NHS chapter at Stevenson 2 years ago. Chapter members undertook this project in an effort to spread the importance of working for the benefit of others, and to break down social barriers and unite the school for a common goal.

Members continued this tradition in 2004 and mobilized to create a memorable holiday for those in need. Along with the senior class of 2005, members created 8 committees dedicated to different aspects of the project. For example, committee 2 created posters for each class listing their sponsored family's wish list. Committee 5 created video announcements which aired on Stevenson's morning news broadcast. Committee 7 was responsible for collecting donations from local businesses and community members. In addition to the work of these committees, the executive board created a database to assign the families to particular classes, clubs or organizations interested in sponsoring them. Money donated by students was used to purchase gifts for each family member and supplies that were sent to the local food pantry.

These efforts culminated on December 7, 2004 when all of the donated items were gathered together and hundreds of bags of gifts and boxes of food were prepared. The next day, committee members delivered the gifts to a local charity who distributed them to the sponsored families. Collected food items were delivered to the local food pantry. Give-A-Thon 2004 collected over \$75,000 worth of gifts of food and aided 262 families. 96% of the student school population participated in this project in addition to community residents and local businesses.

9. C. Leon King High School of Tampa, Florida, is the recipient of our next award for their King High School Relay for Life.

Relay for Life is the signature fundraising event of the American Cancer Society. This year's Relay for Life provided an opportunity for members of the chapter to develop student leadership experiences through team development and planning, empower students whose lives were affected by cancer, involve the larger school community in a worthy cause and make a significant contribution to the American Cancer Society.

The Executive Committee spearheaded the beginning stages of the project by getting the event listed on the school calendar, communicating with the American Cancer Society and school community, planning a timeline and developing a theme for the event. The group chose "*Where in the World is the Cure for Cancer?*" as the theme and each competing team represented a different geographic area.

The chapter held 20 information and training sessions after school in November and December which included a recruitment video and question/answer session. Students then formed 43 teams of 10-15 members, headed by team captains. Each team, supervised by an NHS officer, planned fundraisers, created a team banner, and developed a team name and slogan (i.e. Team Broadway with the slogan, "Closing the Curtain on Cancer.") Those officers not assigned to supervise teams worked closely with the American Cancer Society to facilitate the collection of donations. Each team member started with a goal of \$100, and eventually exceeded their goal of \$75,000.

In addition to soliciting outside donations, students made donations for luminaria bags, a staple at each Relay event. With help from faculty, staff and other community members, they labeled each bag with the name of a person with cancer, the name of the person(s) honoring or remembering him/her and the relationship. A paper star for each of these individuals was also crafted and 1,000 stars lined the windows of the school's main office one week before the event. The students collected over \$6,000 from the luminary event, bringing the event total to \$81,000 for the programs and services of the American Cancer Society.

10. Arroyo High School, in El Monte, California for their Project 501 C (3).

Members of this chapter decided to take the initiative and become their own non-profit organization. Described as “a broad-based service learning initiative designed to cultivate inner-city teenagers’ sense of community stewardship,” Project 501 C (3) exposes chapter members to a wide array of community issues and organizations. During the school year members sought out various projects and partnerships with other service clubs and community organizations.

Over 70 projects were accomplished during the year, including forest replanting, staffing food assembly lines, and the El Monte beautification project where members clean abandoned locations and removed excess vegetation and painted the homes of elderly citizens. Members were placed in charge of coordinating each event, providing more opportunities for more involvement and development of their leadership skills.

Several partners involved in this project are the U.S. Department of Forestry, L.A. Regional Food Bank, City of Los Angeles, El Monte Police Department, and California Philharmonic Orchestra. Some of these partnerships have been in existence for as many as 5 years.

During the past 12 months, the 34 members of the chapter have averaged over 160 hours each in service projects around the city. They have received dozens of requests for assistance from organizations, but, as a measure of the program’s success, they are unable to honor all requests. **Community involvement has become a way of life for many of the Arroyo NHS members** and they have seen their roles with other organizations expanded due to the deep connections they’ve made with individuals in the community.

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All of our winning chapters have displayed organizational talents and truly dynamic leadership by both students and advisers; they have demonstrated effective communication skills, and massive amounts of caring. These 10 Honor Society chapters have accomplished miracles.

For their leadership and for serving as role models to all NHS and NJHS chapters nationwide, we congratulate all ten winners of the 2005 Outstanding Service Projects. Awards for the 2005 OSP were presented to these chapters at the 2005 NHS & NJHS National Conference held in Washington, DC, November 11-13, 2005.

We hope all chapters will consider entering their service projects in next year’s competition, winners to be announced at the 2006 National Conference in Orlando, Florida, next November. For more information about competing for an OSP Award, please visit www.nhs.us and click the “Conferences and Programs” button for more information about the National Conference and the activities included in each year’s meetings.