

YOU CAN HOST **A**

**SERVANT
EVENT**





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Event Planning



Servant Events are exciting, energizing and enjoyable events. But they are far from simple to execute. Combining congregational groups from across the country means even more to organize and plan. A dedicated and faithful group of leaders can make this happen. When Servant Events are done well, they can create a lifetime impact for participants and those they serve.

This section covers some of the big picture pieces of event planning. Detailed descriptions of roles, publicity, registration and timelines are available in other sections.

PLANNING YOUR OBJECTIVES

First, the leadership team (primarily the Event Director, Service Director and Community Life Director) must set the objectives for the event. Once objectives are in place, the team can plan, budget and look for additional volunteers.

Objectives will help you to prioritize your program and choices, as well as your budget items. It will also help you to promote your event to other churches and encourage donations. Setting objectives can start by asking the question: “What personal, spiritual, and interpersonal growth or changes would you like to see occur in the participants’ values, interests and lives as a result of the event?”

Your leadership team may come up with a variety of ways to answer this question. It’s best to limit your event objectives to three or four. Make them concise, specific, achievable, measurable and personal. If you need, consider looking at the Seven Practices of Healthy Youth Ministry, including the 40 End Goals for Youth Ministry. (These are available on YouthESource.com.)

Sample Objectives:

- › Participants will help conduct a day camp experience for children (ages 4–10) involving children with special needs.
- › Participants will build relationships with youth and adults from other congregations so that all will feel less alone in their life of faith.
- › Participants will better understand vocation and service because of Jesus’ love for us so that they engage in service more frequently back home.

Participants will have a safe, joyful, and engaging experience that will encourage them to bring more young people to future servant events.

As you plan your event, return to these often. Put them at the top of every meeting agenda, and share them with participants during the preparation process. It may be helpful to include questions in your evaluation that help you measure these objectives as well.

MAKING A PLAN

Logistics and organization are crucial! Many important components of a Servant Event are directed by volunteers. Everyone must serve together and be prepared. Participants can usually sense within the first hour of the event if you are prepared or “running amuck.” When participants sense disorganization it can lead to all kinds of problems.

This resource will focus on the planning components that are developed as a team. There are many other components to event planning that are dependent on the leader’s role. To help keep the volunteers clear, we will give a planning timeline, checklist and other planning information for each role separately.

SETTING THE SCHEDULE

The leadership team may wonder how to fill an entire week of programming during a Servant Event. However, once you get into planning, you may find there isn’t enough time! Servant Events typically include service, Bible study, devotions, learning, worship, social time, eating, group recreation and cross-cultural activities.

Your schedule will look unique to your event. Things to keep in mind as you plan your schedule include:

- › Make participants feel comfortable and welcome from the moment they arrive. Be aware of and concerned for the comfort of all participants. Lack of concern for the physical well-being of servants will affect their attitude and potential for growth through the event.

- › Develop some daily patterns for your event. It can be difficult for youth in a new place with new activities to keep track of a schedule that changes every day. Stick to your schedule and avoid changing it.
- › Be sure that there is a balance of service, spiritual development and community time.
- › Be sensitive to the group's energy level as it changes during the week. Stretch the participants, but not to the breaking point. You may be very excited about a high energy activity at the end of the week, but be sure participants are excited as well. Above all, be flexible and ready to make adjustments.
- › If your event is focused on junior high students, build your schedule with awareness of their limited focus and high energy. Likewise, if you are focused on young adults, you can make your service longer, but you may want to provide increased personal time for decompression.
- › Be sure to allow for travel time and unexpected delays. Allow enough time to get where you need to be, factoring in how long it takes X number of people to eat, shower,

congregate, etc. The more people, the more time it takes for everything.

- › Plan time each day to meet with the Servant Event leadership team and adult leaders. When you meet, evaluate the day, go over plans for the next day, make program and schedule adjustments and deal with problems. Getting informal feedback and evaluation from the participants each day is also important.
- › Schedules may need to be adjusted due to unexpected weather or service situations. It is always helpful to have a backup plan if these impact your schedule.
- › Provide appropriate and adequate time for Bible study and worship to happen each day. Be sensitive to the physical and social needs of servants. For example, do not schedule core programming like Bible study after lunch or late at night.

The key to a successful event is scheduling an appropriate balance of activities. Too much of any single activity (work or free time) can cause dissatisfaction and possible dissension. Bottom line: have a well thought out schedule, but also be flexible!

POSSIBLE SCHEDULE FOR THE SERVANT EVENT WEEK

SUNDAY

- 2:00 p.m. Registration
- 4:00 Opening/Icebreakers
- 5:00 Adult orientation
- 6:00 Dinner
- 7:00 All Participant Orientation/Community Building
- 8:30 Servant Bible study

MONDAY/TUESDAY/THURSDAY/FRIDAY

- 6:45 a.m. Adult leader meeting
- 7:00 Breakfast
- 8:00 Devotions
- 8:30 Head to service sites
- Noon Lunch
- 4:00 p.m. Return to clean up
- 5:30 Dinner
- 7:30 Servant Event Bible study
- 8:30 Free time/social activity
- 11:00 Lights out

WEDNESDAY

- 6:45 a.m. Adult leader meeting
- 7:00 Breakfast
- 8:00 Devotions
- 8:30 Head to service sites
- Noon Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. Servant Bible study

Special cultural, recreational or social event in the afternoon and evening. The meal is a part of this break in the work week.

SATURDAY

- 7:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:00 Devotions
- 8:30 Evaluation of Servant Event
- 9:00 Talking about Servant Events in our own community
- 10:00 Pack up
- 11:00 Closing worship/farewells

EVENT LOCATIONS

Hosting a Servant Event means identifying locations for each part of the programming. These locations may set limitations on your event or schedule that you need to consider as you plan.

Servant events will need a location for:

- › Sleeping
- › Bathrooms and showers
- › Cooking, set up, cleaning, and storing food
- › Eating
- › Service
- › Downtime or free time
- › Social activities, large group games
- › Recreation

Sometimes Servant Event hosts can offer one location for sleep, showers, eating and free time. Other events may need to be more creative. As you plan, account for the limitations of each of these locations. For example, if you have a limited number of showers, you will need to ensure you give ample time for everyone to get a shower every day. This may limit the amount of time you have for evening activities and recreation.

You will also need to consider how to transport participants from each of these locations. Some events utilize generous host homes. However, participants need transportation to meals, back to host homes after service to clean up and at the end of the night. In identifying host homes, you may need to prioritize homes that are within a certain radius in order to ensure everyone can keep to the schedule.

COORDINATING DETAILS

Each member of the leadership team will be responsible for different aspects of the event. It is critical that everyone communicates plans and expectations in advance of the event. While you don't want to duplicate work, you do want everyone to be aware of what the other leaders are planning.

The Event Director should plan regular meetings where everyone relays updates on what they are planning. As they do, it is important to relay:

- › Who is going to be responsible for each part of the event and in the transitions between programs
- › What space and set up will be required
- › How much time will it take
- › What supplies are needed
- › What (if any) advance communication needs to go out to adult leaders or participants
- › What contingency plans are in place
- › How the plan aligns with the objectives of the event and the hoped for outcomes

- › Additional support needed
- › Outstanding questions or decisions

A well balanced team allows individuals to take ownership of their areas, while keeping team members connected to communicate details and make decisions. As you get closer to the event, plan a longer meeting to walk through the entire event step by step to ensure you haven't missed anything.

HELPING YOUTH LEARN FROM THEIR SERVICE

Servant Events can offer powerful learning for both youth and adults. Service learning is a teaching tool that combines service with active learning and ongoing reflection. Through service learning, young people are equipped to respond to needs they see around them, and helped to understand why these needs exist. As a result, they are encouraged to reflect on what they can do through the power of the Holy Spirit, both now and in the future, to respond in faith to needs they have come to know firsthand.

A process for reflection could include:

- › Naming what was done
- › Identifying feelings, lessons and observations
- › Sharing what has been learned and ongoing questions

Discussion isn't the only way to debrief following service. Other ways can include:

- › Journaling. Provide a quiet time for participants to reflect on their service experience each day. Journaling prompts can be reprinted in your Servant Event booklet to assist participants.
- › Story telling
- › Skits/Drama
- › Music
- › Visual arts
- › Small group work

Try various approaches with which you are comfortable. Give the group a few options, and encourage members to share anything they feel comfortable bringing to the group.

If your Servant Event is for junior high students, remember that they are developing the ability to think abstractly and to analyze broad situations. Help guide their thinking in a developmentally appropriate way. Adolescents are prone to a self-centered perspective. Service is an opportunity for them to explore and consider current and future vocations that focus them on others, rather than themselves.

Ask open-ended questions for journaling or small group discussion. This enables more extended and thoughtful responses. Encourage youth to consider ways they can continue learning and serving back at home.

PREPARING FOR THE WORST

While we pray that your event goes exactly to plan, we know that there are always hiccups or road bumps along the way. The leadership team should plan for these and be on the same page in case something goes wrong.

As a leadership team, it is important to:

- › Pray that God protects and provides for your team and participants, and gives you wisdom and patience for difficult moments.
- › Calculate the minimum number of participants the event can have. While no one wants to cancel an event for lack of registrations, it is also important that the leadership team be good stewards of their resources. Know the number of participants required to make the event fiscally sound, and have a deadline for securing that number. If you need assistance in promoting your event because you are at risk of canceling, please contact LCMS Youth Ministry.
- › Consider what service can be done if a service site does not go as planned. A site may fall through or become difficult to continue working at for many reasons. Participants may also complete work faster than you expect. Have several backup service options in case you need them.
- › Make sure the leadership team is on the same page when it comes to discipline. There is an important balance between the leadership team and the adult leaders of each group in handling misbehavior. Ideally, all the adults work together for the benefit of each young person. It is important to define hard boundaries the group has for event participants, and to communicate those boundaries clearly to adult leaders.
- › Plan for how service sites will be handled if service isn't completed. While you hope that participants will be able to finish all the service at a site, it might not be possible. As a leadership team, create a procedure to communicate with each site after the event, and for timely completion of any outstanding work.
- › Communicate your guidelines for participants with adult leaders in advance. This includes rules you want participants to follow so that every group can include it in their group covenant. Some suggestions include:
 - Do not leave a location designated for service or social time without an adult, and notify an event leader if you leave.
 - Men and women should not enter each other's sleeping space.

- Participants are expected to engage in all programming.

- › Plan for how you will communicate and make decisions that impact the group during the event. Spur of the moment decisions that are not communicated clearly to other team members can be a problem. Instead, plan to communicate often, and have key leaders make decisions together.

COMMUNICATION DURING EVENT

Since most people text easily, texting may be the best way to get daily information to adult leaders or participants. A number of resources can centralize texting. A Google Voice number gives access to multiple people. You can also use services like GroupMe, Remind or Sendhub.

If texting isn't an option, give the group a list of phone numbers they can call with questions or concerns during the event.

ADULT ORIENTATION AND MEETINGS

Provide an orientation on the first evening of the event for adult leaders. This will help adults to communicate clearly to their youth, and encourage their healthy participation in your event. Take questions that are important for the group, and share changes in the plan for the week with everyone at once.

Topics for this meeting can include:

- › Introducing the leadership team and other key volunteers
- › Reviewing the schedule
- › Reviewing the service sites and those being served (may be done by Service Director)
- › Overview of the local community
- › Assigning specific responsibilities (if any)
- › Providing rules for housing
- › Providing clear information and procedures in the event of an emergency (first contacts, emergency phone, first-aid items, what to do and what not to do with an injured individual, etc.) This information should be shared in writing.
- › Directions to the closest stores for possible last-minute items
- › Answering questions and addressing concerns

Clarify the process on how discipline issues will be handled, specifying the responsibilities of adult participants, and what will be decided by the event leadership. This can include dress code, leaving service or housing sites, broken items, etc. Be upfront about how discipline is to be handled—don't assume anything.

Share your expectations of adult participants. As you plan your orientation, remember that these statements may be true for the adults who are participating with youth:

- › They are on the trip because they were the only adults willing to go.
- › They do not realize what Servant Events are all about, or have not done anything like this before.
- › They did not receive proper equipping and orientation.
- › They may not know the youth they came with.
- › They may come with a variety of experiences with short-term service.
- › They may have other (perceived or real) priorities/responsibilities/expectations on this trip.
- › They may want a role or responsibility which isn't theirs.

Sample Ideas for Adult Leader Expectations

An adult leader is responsible to the congregation and to the group for the care and nurture of group members during the Servant Event. An adult leader is expected to attend all event activities and participate fully throughout the Servant Event. Adults are expected to:

- › Love kids and enjoy being around them. They'll have to live with them for several days, and they will develop relationships that will last long after the event!
- › Reflect the love Jesus has shown them by being forgiving, compassionate, patient and faithful models of servant leadership in Christ. Adults should realize this is a wonderful, faith-building opportunity in the lives of youth and youth leaders.
- › Communicate clearly with participants, volunteers and event leaders.
- › Be team players by supporting and working with other adult leaders, and by following event guidelines.
- › Know how to be THE adult. Leaders must know and

maintain appropriate personal, physical and emotional boundaries and behaviors between adults and youth. Adults should help youth maintain appropriate boundaries with other youth and adults.

As a leadership team, the adult leaders are your partners. Use lots of patience, love and care! When the adults and youth go home, they should feel that they were an integral part of the event. In other words, they should have a sense of ownership of the event, and (hopefully) have become interested in sponsoring an event of their own.

- › Be a leader and decision maker when necessary. Handle unexpected or emergency situations calmly, making caring, intelligent decisions.
- › Communicate appropriately with the supporting congregation and parents.. This is true of relaying injuries, illness or emergencies, as well as positive reporting to the congregation at the end of the event.
- › Have a positive, enthusiastic and trusting attitude, even if tired, frustrated or challenged. Leaders need to remember to have fun, laugh, smile and pray daily.
- › Stay organized and handle details and execution of programming without support. Delegate as needed, and be flexible enough to establish a "contingency plan" if things must change.

Sample Adult Leader Orientation Meetings

Thank you for being here!

- › Your role is vital.
- › Review event service activities
- › Information about local community

Leadership team expectations (develop your own list using these suggestions)

- › The participants will grow spiritually and in their understanding of what it means to be a servant of Christ.
- › We will have a safe and meaningful experience.
- › Everyone will participate fully in all the activities.
- › Youth from different churches will be divided into different service crews.
- › Adult expectations for small group Bible studies and service crews

- › Technology policy
- › Smoking policy
- › Youth with illegal drugs or alcohol will be sent home at their expense.
- › Attitude is everything!

Facilities

Food distribution and guidelines

Emergency procedures

Medical forms and releases

Overview of schedule

Other housekeeping items

Sample Daily Adult Leader Meetings Schedule

Prayer

Service Sites/Crews

- › Immediate issues
- › Tools
- › Questions
- › Things you need

Daily Schedule

- › Adjustments from previous days

Community Development

- › Share any celebrations
- › Share positive moments for other groups' youth participants
- › Important moments from devotions or Bible study
- › Housing and food check-in

Tonight's activity

Assignment of other tasks

FULL PARTICIPANT ORIENTATION AND MEETINGS

It is helpful to provide an orientation on the first evening for all participants. This should be less in-depth than the adult orientation, but may include some of the same material.

Topics for this meeting can include:

- › Introducing the leadership team and other key volunteers
- › Reviewing the schedule
- › Directions for getting food each day
- › Directions for transportation each day
- › Review of important locations around the facilities
- › Reviewing the service sites and those being served (may be done by service director)
- › Providing rules for housing
- › Providing clear information and procedures in the event of an emergency (whom to contact first, emergency phone, first aid items, what to do and what not to do with an injured individual, etc.)
- › Clarify how non-work time can be spent during your event. Discuss your expectations with the group for both community building time and free personal time.

It is also important to name the expectations you have of youth participants. One of the biggest places of conflict is over missed expectations. Helping teens understand what you want of them helps get everyone onto the right foot. This might include:

- › A commitment to participate in the total Servant Event program.
- › Agree to support the objectives of the Servant Event.
- › Respect the residents, customs and needs of the community where the event takes place.
- › Listen to and follow the directions of event leadership and adult leaders.
- › Respect the housing and ensures that it ends cleaner than it started.
- › Pick up after oneself and be responsible for one's own items.
- › Speak kindly and positively about other participants, volunteers, and others in the community.
- › Have an empathetic and loving heart towards those being served, asking questions of adult leaders when this is difficult.

Sample Daily Orientation for All Participants

Meet with the entire group each day. On the first day, meet to review the weekly schedule, participant expectations, covenant, work and living arrangements, etc. Take time to answer questions and concerns so youth and adults are informed.

Prayer

Work site updates

- › Tools
- › Questions
- › Things you need

Schedule today

Schedule tomorrow

Successes and celebrations

Other issues that need to be discussed

Plans for community building and personal free time

EVALUATIONS

Leadership teams start their process by setting objectives. Evaluations are the measure of objectives and a starting place for future events. While evaluations can be a bit painful, they are necessary for leadership development, learning and growth.

Evaluations should be short, and capture both quantitative and qualitative data. There are many online tools you can use to make this easy. Both Google Forms and Microsoft Forms are free to use and easy to set up. In the evaluation you may want to ask:

- › On a scale of 1–5, how do you rate the housing?
- › On a scale of 1–5, how do you rate the food?
- › On a scale, how valuable was the Bible study time?
- › On a scale, did you connect with youth or adults outside of your group?
- › Put in order your favorite part of the week to the least favorite part of the week.
- › What suggestions would you have for next event?

It is important to separate adult leader and youth participant evaluations. These are going to give two different perspectives. You can give the option of an email to follow up if you want honest and open feedback.

You may also get helpful feedback by giving evaluations to those you served, or the leaders of the local organizations you served. It is also helpful to evaluate with all your volunteers. This can be formal or informal, but it helps to see where you can better engage and support them in the future.

Once all the evaluations are in, have a follow up meeting with the leadership team and other congregational leaders to review it.

SENDING SERVANTS FOR SERVICE BACK HOME

A commissioning, litany, special devotional or worship service can help servants celebrate the servant event that is ending and look forward to carrying on service at home. It can also be a reminder that serving and living out their vocations is the lifelong work of a Christian.

The sample given may be a part of the last morning's devotion, or a simple litany in the parking lot before the participants go home. At the end of this time, a sign of servanthood may be shared with participants, such as a certificate, a cross or a towel. Perhaps a hug or foot washing may be the special sign you choose. If you choose a cross, the style or colors could reflect the unique culture in which these young people served.

Provide youth with contact information if they need paperwork filled out for school or other verification. Focus on servants as growing Christians who return home to continue the practice of service in obedience to and imitation of Jesus.

POST-EVENT COMMUNICATION

As the Servant Event draws to its close, many young people take home the special meaning of being a servant and the joy of serving.

These young people return to their congregations with the challenge to look at their community a little harder for opportunities to serve and the challenge to share with their families, friends, and congregations the excitement and joy of being a servant. Before they leave the Servant Event, help prepare them for their transition by discussing and sharing ideas.

A post-event mailing to participants could provide additional support, sharing of ideas, and encouragement. (You might even be able to track down the owner of that beach towel left behind.)

In your post-event mailing, you can reflect on the event, thank participants for their involvement and accomplishments, and encourage them again to continue serving at home. Direct them to check with their local congregation, their pastor, other church or school staff, local social service agencies or their district office for opportunities to serve near their homes.

Worship services offer another opportunity to communicate with people at home. Servants may share during announcements in worship, or host a special Sunday School hour or a thank you lunch. Perhaps the servants can brainstorm about congregational engagement before they leave the Servant Event, and take these ideas home.

If you can help provide encouragement or ideas, servants can more easily sustain their energy and excitement to continue serving for Jesus' sake.

COMMISSIONING FOR SERVICE BACK HOME

Opening Song

L: As our week comes to a close, it is time to say goodbye, and to welcome the chance to put our life of service into practice back home.

P: We have been changed this week in big and small ways. The Master Builder has touched all of us. We take with us these changes and experiences to touch the lives of those at home.

L: You have been called to build up the household of God. Strengthen one another with love and encouragement. Trust that His Spirit goes with you as you go forth and serve.

P: The Holy Spirit is with us; His presence strengthens us for service. We trust in the Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

L: Will you now go forth in His name as transformed servants of the Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and will you follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and serve one another?

P: Yes, we go forth in His name and in His footsteps. Jesus goes with us.

L: Will you continue to grow in your faith and seek ways to witness to Jesus' power?

P: With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will continue to grow in Christ, and reflect His love to the people who surround us.

L: Now as you go your way, may God go with you. May He go before you to show you the way. May He go behind you to encourage you, beside you to befriend you, above you to watch over you, and within you to give you peace. May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be and abide with you always.

P: Amen. Let it be so. Amen.

Closing Song

Go In Peace - Serve the Lord!



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