

YOU CAN HOST **A**

**SERVANT
EVENT**



Publicity



Every Servant Event needs participants. Publicity will help you to connect with congregations who may bring their youth to your Servant Event. It will also help spread the word to your local community to garner additional support. Publicity might seem like a small piece compared to the program planning, but it's critical to a successful event.

While LCMS Servant Events will help get the word out about your event, there are lots of other ways you can publicize it too. Your leadership team can work together to help find groups to join you or share the event with your community. You can get creative here. Some avenues of communication may be easier to use than you realize!

STARTING WITH A WEBSITE/EVENT LANDING PAGE

As you begin planning your event, it is important to have a central location where you can communicate and update information for potential participants. This location should be an online “landing page” for the event. This may be the page provided by LCMS Youth Ministry on the LCMS Servant Event site, or a page on your website that is linked from the LCMS Servant Event page.

LCMS congregations and participants have a lot of options for youth ministry programs and activities. Your landing page is important to communicate information that engages adult leaders, and helps them find events that meet their schedule, budget and preferred program options.

Your landing page is a great location to point people to basic information about your event. This is why it is important to include as much information as you feel confident sharing on that page and keep it up to date. Suggested information to include:

- › Event date with arrival and departure times
- › Location/Address
- › Cost per person
- › Deposit amount
- › What's included/not included in registration fee
- › Registration process (group size restrictions, first come/first serve, youth to adult ratio)
- › Cancellation policy
- › Tentative schedule
- › Service overview (Be clear about suggested age and skill level.)
- › Accommodations
- › Recreation options (en route to event or during)

If you are including photos, stay away from stock photos. Use real photos of your event, even if they aren't perfect. People will notice it is a genuine look at your event. If you have a theme or logo for your event, this is the best place to highlight it.

Be ready to hear from people who find your event online and may ask for more information or clarification. Be prepared to respond quickly with additional information. Individuals and groups should be provided with as much information as necessary to make an informed decision about participating in your Servant Event.

Putting your event on LCMS Servant Event website

LCMS Youth Ministry provides publicity for your Servant Event through their website (lcms-servantevents.org). After completing the necessary paperwork or connection with LCMS Youth Ministry, Event Directors (or a designated person) are given access to the site as a “Program Host Manager.” This site (on the Galaxy Digital platform) provides a one-stop location for participants to find LCMS Servant Events that match their desired location, dates, and type of service. Through the site, Event Directors can manage their event's page to provide timely updates and interact with interested participants. The site also allows LCMS Youth Ministry to share your event more effectively on social media.

On the site, your event's Program Host Manager creates new events, updates pertinent information and closes your events when it fills. When setting up an event for a new service year, Program Host Managers simply “clone” the previous event, which copies it for the new year. Hosts only need to update dates and other specific information. LCMS Youth Ministry staff is there to help you administer your event and website.

On the site, potential participants can “fan” your site, which means they will automatically receive updates via email when you set new events, etc. Potential participants can also “Respond” to your specific event. This provides you contact information for potential adult leaders, and provides hosts with information on potential participants from the congregation.

Note that registration does not happen through the Galaxy Digital web tool. (See information on registration under the Event Director information in the *Team Leadership Roles and Responsibilities* section.)

GETTING THE WORD OUT

You will need more than a landing page to get the attention of potential participants, church groups, and your community. Get the word out about your event as widely as possible, in whatever ways you can. Your publicity plan can be as creative as you like, but will probably include:

- › social media
- › congregational newsletters
- › communication to local Lutheran schools
- › emails
- › local newspaper or television networks
- › LCMS district social media and newsletters

Start by identifying the networks that can be used locally or through your district. Connecting with local congregations, schools and your LCMS district will bring in participants and encourage additional support. Your pastor may be a big help in identifying some of these networks. If you have hosted an event in the past, don't forget to reach out to previous participants. Encourage them not only to join you again, but to bring another congregational group with them.

Highlight what is unique about your Servant Event. Perhaps it's the population you will serve, your local community or a part of your programming. There are several Servant Events offered for youth ministries each week. You want the best feature of your event to be what people see and hear about.

Here are a few keys to all your publicity plans:

- › Recruit volunteers with specific skills in your congregation, or use free software like Canva to create images, colors and tag lines to associate with your event. Once you have a basic idea, create flyers, social media posts, emails and other promotional pieces to get the word out about the event. Use these images on your landing page or the LCMS Servant Event page.
- › Be sure that articles, posts, and other publicity pieces include key information. It's not helpful to get someone interested in your event if they don't have the dates, location, or contact information.
- › As you choose photos or talk about your event, balance information about participants working and having fun.

If you use more of one or the other, it may misrepresent what your event is about.

- › Always get permission from adults or parents/guardians of minors before you use photos or quotes in print or on social media. Even minors should give approval for photos and quotes if possible. Have adult leaders or the parents/guardians of minors sign a release for use of photos. Include another release statement for publication of written responses on evaluations, and verbal comments. Be sure that local residents have been asked for permission before using photos or quotations that involve their story.

Sharing publicity in your community

While you want to encourage LCMS congregations from your area, district and across the country to join your event, they are not the only people to whom you will publicize. You may find many ways to get information about your event in local news, social media, community businesses, and more. Publicizing Servant Events provides an outstanding vehicle for communicating the Gospel message of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Servant Events typically involve members of the community from a variety of backgrounds and areas working together to improve the conditions of people they did not even know. Servant Events provide unique and vibrant examples of the love of Jesus at work in the lives of His people. What a message to spread!

Effective publicity to your local community may be more powerful than you think. Publicity:

- › Communicates the love of Jesus Christ in the form of service to others.
- › Invites the larger community to share in the work of serving, and may encourage acts of service far beyond the time of a single event.
- › Heightens awareness of the event for community members, allowing for increased support of the event through prayers and resource donations.
- › Affirms and encourages participants and volunteers in their service, and helps them feel support from the Church at large.

Participants have chosen to spend their time serving the community, which might be outside cultural expectations. While this is not the only reason to highlight a Servant Event in the news, it almost always encourages the local press to provide coverage. Use the information below to develop a publicity strategy that tells the Good News of Jesus and His work in the lives of people in your community.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be overwhelming to some and exciting for others. You do not have to start multiple social media

accounts or platforms to publicize your event effectively. However, actively using existing channels can get your event out to a whole new audience, and even help participants prepare and share their experience.

Have a conversation with your congregation's or organization's social media coordinator. Let them help you make a plan for using existing channels, or creating new ones specifically to publicize your Servant Event. Use images, quotations and stories about the event, rather than repeating basic information.

Many successful posts are going to encourage you to "Find more information here" with a link.

You may also be able to create a landing page on your church's website to share information. If not, you can use your Galaxy Digital page. Having a landing page with full information gives you a link to include with all your social media posts.

There are some easy things you can do to get the word out about your event.

- › Have a volunteer who plans and creates posts on social media. This might be the person who is taking photos, or someone different, like the Community Life Director. Having one person do this helps with timing and consistency.
- › Use photos to capture attention. Photos and videos from previous events are helpful. If you haven't had an event in the past, draw images from around your community. You can create images using verses highlighted in your Bible studies, or take photos of your congregation/organization's youth serving.
- › Create an event on Facebook with key information and a link to register. This gives participants or those considering your event a place to leave comments and questions.
- › Use posts to highlight deadlines. Many groups will wait until the last minute to register. Social media can be a good reminder to submit information to event leadership.
- › If you are on a platform, use all the features to share your event. This means not just posting on Instagram but using Reels and other features as well.
- › Create different kinds of posts. It might be easy to come up with simple content that has dates and deadlines. If you can, be creative in highlighting what is unique about your event. Use quotes or play games. You can even connect with your participants before they join you by including them in polls or questions before the event.
- › When possible, use social media trends. Youth may be able to help you identify which ones would work for your event. This increases the chance the platform will highlight your post.
- › Encourage parents and congregations sending groups to follow social media to see how groups are serving throughout the event. Be sure to tag congregations back

home, as well as RSOs or non-profits you are serving in your posts.

All social media should help tell the story of your event. In addition to sharing information, use what is unique and compelling about your event to garner excitement. Share about the impact (or the hoped for outcome) of the event. Use quotes from past events. If you haven't had an event in the past, ask leaders who are helping plan the event what they are most excited about, and quote their responses.

Let LCMS Youth Ministry know if you have a particularly important post to share. We can amplify your event through our channels. At the yearly training, there will be a form to further connect you to our team for publicity.

SHARING MORE IN-DEPTH INFORMATION

Longform pieces can tell more of your event's story. This can be helpful both as you look for registrations, and after your event to highlight what God has done through your service.

Develop Servant Event news releases or short articles for:

- › Your community: Local television stations, radio stations and newspapers are important places to share your new release.
- › Your district: Most districts have a physical or email newsletter where you can publicize your registration and your event.
- › Local Newsletters: Share valuable information in your congregation, day school or homeschool co-op news. Local Lutheran and public high schools are often interested in sharing Servant Event information in their newsletters as well, especially if the news highlights enrolled students.

When writing a longer article or press release it is important to remember these tips.

- › Always answer: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and HOW, but be concise. Use familiar and concrete action words. Grammar checkers can help you use active, not passive, voice, and improve clarity. Avoid using clichés.
- › DO NOT extend a news release beyond one, double-spaced page. Display contact information (phone number and email) prominently across the top of a news release. A news release is NOT an article. Writing the article is the job of the reporter assigned to your event. The news release is designed to catch attention and provide relevant facts. If the media source wants more information, they will contact you for a follow-up.
- › Edit, edit, edit! Have several individuals edit your article. This ensures everything is correct, and tightens your text.

When writing something after the event, include quotes from participants in your news release or article. Allow the quotations to serve as the meat of the article, while the basic facts are the skeleton.

When interviewing, avoid broad WHY questions. Ask participants to summarize their experience, or to share a specific moment that touched and changed them. This can include questions like:

- › What were the highlights or surprises for you?
- › What challenges or unexpected events occurred?
- › What affected you the most during this event? Why?
- › What would you say to someone considering an LCMS Servant Event?

Be sure to share these interviews with the report sent to LCMS Youth Ministry!

PUBLICITY DURING YOUR EVENT

Invite local media to witness a part of the event. Event Directors might take an hour to escort media personnel through servant sites, invite reporters to hear testimonies of participants at concluding services or activities, ask service recipients to share comments with the press, etc.

Post pictures, quotes, and stories of your event on social media while it is happening. This lets youth to share what they have done with people at home without having to be on their phones creating content themselves. Work with your volunteer photographer/videographer to help create posts about all aspects of the event: service, Bible studies and fun during downtime.

Tag support congregations' social media in your posts. This will help them to share what is happening as well.

Let the community know what is happening DURING the actual event. Post placards along roadsides where participants are in action, welcome participants with banners hung near your organization, encourage local restaurants or local LCMS congregations to hang posters welcoming servant groups.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOS

Have someone who can spend time every day during your event taking pictures and videos. If possible, make it that person's primary role. They can tour all the service sites, be involved in community building, and be present throughout the event.

When they are serving, the participants' focus should be on the task at hand, and not on their phones or cameras. Participants may not know or think about having media releases for those in the photos. Having an appointed photographer, particularly on service sites, frees participants and leadership from worry about missing key moments.

However, participants might have unique opportunities to take pictures. When it is appropriate, you can encourage participants to take photos. This may be where you get the best candid shots of your youth interacting with one another and having fun.

At the end of the event, give them all a link to a Google Drive or Dropbox where they can post their own photos to share. Have your photographer/videographer upload their photos there as well, so groups can use them in talking about the event and have them for families back home. These photos will also help you publicize your next event.

Software programs (such as iMovie) make it relatively easy to create a professional-looking video of your event. If you can, recruit a tech savvy youth or adult from your community to serve the event with this talent. Share your video with local congregations, agencies and individuals who participated in your event.

A few words about photos and videos—

- › Always have signed media release forms for everyone in the photos or videos you take.
- › Be sure to keep a record of WHO is being photographed and to WHAT congregation they belong (when possible).
- › Have a list of all participants so that you know whom you have photographed, and whom you might still need to capture.
- › Watch for interesting combinations of people working together. Different ages, sexes, and ethnicities make for compelling photographs.
- › Look for engagement. Keep an eye open for energy, laughter and moments that extend beyond simply painting a wall. Capture the holistic nature of service in the name of Jesus.
- › As you select photos to publish, make sure subjects' eyes are open and expressions are positive. Check for clothing or background that could be problematic.

Leaders often think they can take photos on top of their other responsibilities, but then get distracted. There is nothing worse than getting to the end of your week and finding you have few photos of the event or participants.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Headline)

CONTACT: (your name)

PHONE:

HOME TOWN, STATE (abbreviation)—**DATE**—(Name of Group) from (Name of Church), (City), (State), made a difference in someone’s life this (Season-Summer). (Number of Youth) young people and their adult leaders from (Name of Congregation) traveled to (Location) on (Date) joining other teens from (Other States) to (Type of Work). “(Quote #1 from adult coordinator),” said (name of adult counselor).

LCMS Servant Events provide teens an opportunity to grow in servanthood by doing service for others.

“(Quote #2 from youth),” said (name and age of youth). “(finish quote).”

The opportunity to serve had a price. In addition to volunteering their time, the group raised funds to attend the event by (list ways the group raised funds).

Not only did the event have a lasting impact on the (people served), each youth brought home lasting memories. “(Quote #3),” said (name of youth). “(Quote #4).”

(Event host) hosts an annual Servant Event. The next event is scheduled to take place (dates). For more information about (servant event) visit (website).