

Centennial: Philanthropists - Servants Of The Community

Summary

by Sheri Sohm. Community minded citizens can make a lasting difference. Everyone can serve their community in some way.

Materials

Biographical information on the Dee family

Information on Lowell Bennion.

Lewis, Barbara, A Kids Guide to Social Action, Free Spirit Publishing 1991 (optional teacher provided).

Student service projects.

Background for Teachers

The Thomas D. Dee Memorial Hospital in Ogden, Utah served the community from December 29, 1910 to July 12, 1969. The Dee Memorial Hospital began as the dream of Mrs. Dee who had lost her husband and son to illness. This family grew to prominence from poverty. They dedicated their minds and resources to community improvement, providing the city of Ogden with a hospital now known as the McKay Dee Hospital. Lowell Bennion, a local philanthropist, dedicated his life to service. Bennion sought ways to help the poor and needy in direct and personal ways. Many service minded members of society enrich their communities through donated time, organized programs, and financial support for causes that they embrace. By reading the stories of Dee and Lowell Bennion, students will identify ways in which they might contribute to their community.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will study the lives of community benefactors.

Students will discuss the need for citizens to give back to their community.

Students will identify a way to perform service within their community.

Students will consider providing 'Random Acts of Kindness.'

Instructional Procedures

See preface material for the Utah Centennial Lesson Plans book.

Lead a class discussion on friendship.

Ask students what they feel are the characteristics of a best friend. Brainstorm a list.

Share ideas. They might include: unselfishness, having a listening ear, giving time, being fun to be with, enjoying time spent together, unconditional caring, etc. Explain that friendship can extend beyond the school yard. People can be friends to organizations and communities as well.

Copy and pass out biographical information on Dee and Bennion. Half the class will read about Dee and the other half will read about Bennion. After reading, encourage the students to share what they have learned. Discuss the two men.

Read the quote: 'In the beginning I didn't know what philanthropy was: now I've lived it.' This is a quote from a student at George Washington High in New York City. Ask what the word philanthropy means.

Seek a definition from the class. Have them look up and define philanthropy.

Using the class definition, discuss the lives of Dee and Bennion. In what ways are they 'best friends' to the community? Compare and contrast the characteristics of a personal best friend and a friend of the community.

Ask students 'Why would people spend time and money helping organizations and people they don't

know?- Ask students if they have been participated in service to friends, neighbors or the community? Share the experiences with the class.

Ask students, 'Can students help make a difference in the world?' Pass out the stories about student service projects.

Identification of Need: *Envisioning Activity:* Explain that the students will be taking an imaginary trip. Instruct them to close their eyes and let their mind visualize. Imagine their room in the morning. Ask them to look around the room and notice the things that need improvement. Now imagine walking out of the room and through the house. Ask, 'Are there ways your house could be improved, or you could provide service?' Ask students to imagine walking toward school, looking to the right and the left. Notice the sidewalks, road, plants, houses, yards, and buildings along the way. Ask students to consider who is in need of help, what areas need work, which places need cleaning, painting, repair, etc. Ask students if they know of neighborhood people who are lonely or in need of service. Continue speaking as students imagine the walk.

Now ask students to imagine walking around the school yard. What are the needs of the school? Continue talking and asking questions while the students are imagining with their eyes closed.

Ask students to open their eyes and identify the people and places that have a need, problem or issue that could be discussed in class. Ask each group to share their ideas with the class. Keep a record of student ideas. Consider what might be an appropriate project for the class.

Review the list and select an interesting project.

After identifying a problem, students will: 1) brainstorm what they would like to do, 2) decide what resources will be needed, 3) write a plan of action, 4) describe what will be done, 5) assign tasks, 6) carry out the project!

Random Acts of Kindness: Have a class discussion about small ways to serve others. List the ways that people might share kindnesses each day.

Challenge students to perform 'Random Acts of Kindness' without expecting praise. Discuss how their experiences made them feel.

Extensions

Ask students to write a report on their experience with service. The report could take the form of a letter to another class, to the editor of a newspaper, to the Bennion Center at the University of Utah, or a local service organization. Ask the students to consider the entire process. How was the service project chosen, what planning was done, who was involved and in what ways did the service benefit the community? Students should include their feelings in the report and give suggestions to others wanting to provide community service.

Students may wish to start an in-class or after school Service Club. Students can organize service projects and involve other students in service as well.

Conclude the experience with a celebration which includes refreshments, sharing pictures of the experience, journal writing and reflection on the project. Discuss how students felt before, during, and after the project.

Ask students to compare and contrast the experiences of Dee and Bennion with their own. In what ways can students be Philanthropists?

Note to teacher: There are many projects that students might find interesting. Help students select a project that will be appropriate for their grade level, available time and YOUR interest. Projects may be as simple as organizing a fruit basket for an elderly neighbor and delivering it as a class. Students may wish to connect a service project with an issue being studied in class. As students discuss current events such as homelessness in the community, they may wish to collect items that could be donated to a local shelter. If they know of a neighbor who has been hospitalized, they may offer to do some yard work or serve in other ways. If there is a Senior Citizens home nearby they may organize a program of song to present there. The possibilities are endless!

Authors

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