

# "Just Do It"

Young people involved with ministry are eager to tell their friends.

## *Christian Outreach— How to get started*



What is the hardest part of providing our students with Christian service opportunities? Getting started! It all seems so overwhelming to many of us. Especially when we already work a 60-hour week. The solution? As one advertisement on TV urges, "Just do it."

Tracy wanted very much to involve his students in service and outreach. He decided to schedule time each week when he and his fourth- to eighth-graders would clean the church. His students enjoyed this time together with their teacher and developed a closer feeling of belonging with their church. Tracy's first efforts didn't require additional adult help or supervision, or permission slips. He did not need to organize transportation, since the church was located next door to the school.

Cleaning the church was fulfilling, but Tracy knew he must plan ahead for additional service opportunities.

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David was principal of a junior academy. His constituency not only believed in a work-study program for all students in grades 1-10, but also expected weekly off-campus witnessing opportunities for most of the older students. Daily schedules reflected these priorities.

At first, adults in the church community faithfully volunteered their time to help teach and supervise the work portion of the education program. In addition to these volunteers, other church members and pastors assisted with the witnessing program.

Students prepared their own Bible studies with the help of a concordance. They presented these studies to members of the community. David planned for transportation, adult supervision, and opportunities for his students to serve.

The program included a puppet ministry for younger children, programs in retirement centers and other churches, and youth festivals. David and his wife devoted their time and energy to integrating this program of ministry into the educational setting.

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These cases are very different, but both recognize that students need the thrill of serving and witnessing. Early on, you need to identify and select a program that is workable for you, recognizing its potential strengths and weaknesses.

### **Service in the Curriculum**

In 1982 many Adventist teachers were introduced to the Christian Service Curriculum K-12 document. This provided a concise but inclusive view of the philosophy and objectives of the program. Many teachers saw this document as providing the justification for taking school time for outreach programs. This formalized and authorized what many teachers were already doing.

However, the document perhaps was too general. It did serve as a general guidebook to spark ideas. But most teachers needed something more specific. "Schools in Action, An Adventist Essential" kits were distributed as a follow-up to this 1982 document. This kit supplied Weekly Bible Reading Guides,

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Prayer List booklets, Harvest 90 Educational Objectives, a mission statement, and posters promoting the educational ministry.

### **Successful Approaches**

Several suggested activities developed into strong programs in the classroom. For instance, the prayer partner program became one of the most positive activities, promoting unity and caring between young and old. Students' faith grew as they kept careful records and entered answered prayers on the form provided.

Many students also prepared greeting cards for birthdays, sympathy, thinking of people, or missing them in church.

Plans that could be implemented in the classroom proved to be the most successful. Nearly as effective were activities that could be done near the school or in an adjacent building. An example is Tracy who once a week walked with his students a few yards across the parking lot to clean the church.

Other programs may be planned for monthly or seasonally. Examples of these include helping school neighbors harvest a crop, raking leaves, painting or repairing houses, or delivering May baskets with scriptures of hope. Several schools have held successful neighborhood story times. At one location, on Wednesday mornings students in grades 6-8 invited neighborhood preschoolers to come and listen to a story that the students prepared and acted out.

However, many activities require transportation, and/or additional adult supervision. Because of the extra work these are often avoided by classroom teachers. How was David able to carry on a weekly program that required many adult volunteers? The answer, of course, is that these volunteers were available. But in small churches, schools with single parents, areas where people are scattered over wide distances, or where most par-

ents work during school hours, volunteers will not be available, and the program may have to be revised.

### **A Vital Role**

Several conferences have made Christian service a priority. They have even titled the program "Bible Labs" to reflect its vital role as a part of the school curriculum. The Washington Conference may have been the first to develop a curriculum and to provide paid personnel to help classroom teachers plan and implement service programs. With trained persons assisting and working side by side with the local pastor, the teacher feels like a member of a witnessing team.

### **Integrating Witnessing Into a Required Curriculum**

The Canadian Union has written and filed an integrated curriculum with the government, allowing students in grades 11 and 12 to experience service as a part of their ongoing class work for credit. This curriculum has a five-step objective:

1. Community Awareness
2. Student Training
3. Volunteer Understanding
4. The Development of Communication Skills
5. Service, Not Fame

Gordon Pifher, youth director at that time, says the real value of this program

was its integration into the weekly schedule rather than being "tacked on." Quoting from the curriculum,

*As a general rule . . . each week there are two 40-minute class periods and one two-hour training lab . . . involving 123 hours of time. Approximately 38 percent of the entire course time is in-class and 62 percent is scheduled for out-of-class experience.*

This has worked well for students of high school age. It would be exciting to have an elementary school pilot this type of program with students from the upper grades.

### **Witnessing Through Canvassing**

Another exciting program for students in grades 5-12 is witnessing through canvassing. Ellen White wrote, "The very best education young men can obtain is by entering the canvassing field and working house to house" (Ms. 75, 1900, p. 32.)

Under the direction of Don Anderson, the Rocky Mountain Conference made the experience available to 10 elementary schools for 1989-1990 school year. Last year the program was expanded to the secondary schools. Twenty-one students canvassed for four-hour shifts, five days a week. Three adult supervisors were hired by the conference to lead out, plus one van driver. Conference constituents purchased a van to be used exclusively for the Megabook Ministry. Skills in meeting people, communicating, negotiating, and caring for a neighbor are some of the rewards, as well as earnings exceeding \$5 per hour.

Mrs. White cites other rewards:

*Their talents will increase by exercise, and they will learn many practical lessons which they could not possibly learn in school. The education obtained in this practical way may properly be termed higher education (Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 331).*

Do you remember the familiar quo-

tation about “an army of youth”? The Megabook Ministry is training an army of youth. Their witness is a wonder to the public. who comment on the young people’s clean, wholesome appearance, and the Christian witness they present in testimony as well as literature. Teenagers involved with this ministry are eager to tell their friends, “I know there is a God, I can talk with Him, He hears me, and He really cares and answers my prayers.”

While this is effective ministry, it does require several supervising adults. As the ministry broadens and students become more confident, it becomes more economical to administer.

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Tracy is expanding his outreach to include a greeting card program and prayer partners between students and church members. After he arranges transportation and volunteer help to supervise the students, Tracy plans to include other forms of outreach in the school program.

David and his wife accepted a call to another school where they shared the Washington Conference Bible Labs program they had used in their previous location. However, the pastor and church community hadn’t heard of this type of witness, so they had little vision of how the church could help with such a program.

### **The Power of Example**

David, meanwhile, grew weary of the struggle and put his plans aside. But Ron, a local school board member, was watching and listening. He believed in outreach. When he was called to be principal of a junior academy, he modified the program to allow for monthly outreach activities rather than weekly. He is carrying on the program as David had introduced it to him.

Tracy, David, and Ron, like many other Adventist teachers, believe service is an essential part of the curriculum. Students need to outwardly express their growing love for Jesus, just as they need to hear adult testimonies and see adult witnessing. A Bible Lab program can fulfill this need. We can seize the blessings Jesus promised if we “Just do it.” \*~\*

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