This listing of community service projects done by college and high school students can provide ideas for new or established programs. It can also be helpful for middle and elementary schools as well as for programs for any age group based in community organizations, youth-serving agencies, service corps, and other non-school settings. Reprinted from Service-Learning: A guide for College Students, National Center for Service Learning, ACTION, pp. 87-91.

**Project Ideas**

**Related to fields of College Study**

- Work with community groups to investigate patterns of loan-credit discrimination against persons with low incomes.
- Instruct halfway house residents in the management of personal finances.
- Organize a fund-raising effort to support community mental health.
- Organize grassroots efforts to encourage the business community to provide jobs for unemployed youth.
- Develop a system to help low-income people prepare tax returns.
- Develop an accounting system for a food co-op.
- Organize an energy audit team to prepare cost estimates for improving the energy efficiency of homes in low-income areas.
- Help obtain financing for community improvement efforts.
- Establish a community credit union.

**Accounting**

- Establish a community gardening project for retired people.
- Study nutritional needs/habits of a low-income community.
- Study cooperative food costs in stores serving low-income neighborhoods.
- Assist older persons with home canning and food preparation.
- Organize an emergency food program.
- Draft legislation to regulate quality of meals served in nursing homes.
- Assist Outreach Programs run by the county health division.
- Develop educational materials on sound dietary habits for pregnant women.

**Agriculture**

This section lists specific projects that have been done by college students as part of their courses in the particular fields of study listed. It is intended to give examples and is certainly not exhaustive.
Anthropology
- Help people in halfway houses explore their “roots.”
- Document the need for mental health care services for Native Americans.
- Become involved in efforts to preserve the heritage of Native Americans.

Architecture
- Help older persons with home improvement.
- Survey care facilities for older persons, comparing these to the standards set by local building codes.
- Design a community center.
- Organize retired carpenters to winterize homes of people with limited incomes.
- Plan the renovation of older homes for use as halfway houses.
- Design economically feasible energy saving plans for homes in poor neighborhoods.
- Assist energy environmental groups to prepare cost and feasibility studies for solar recovery units.
- Investigate the need for improved housing (e.g., using community meeting, door-to-door-canvassing, home visits).
- Find emergency and permanent housing for community members in need.

Biology
- Design a biological park as part of a community center.
- Conduct classes on “What’s Happening to My Body” for retirees.
- Study medical and nutritional practices in homes for older persons.
- Organize groups to lobby for adequate medical attention for people with low incomes.
- Bring pressure on the community zoo to make it accessible to persons with special physical challenges.
- Design a system to help people who are blind to experience zoos, parks.
- Assist neighborhood groups with non-contaminating pest control programs.

Business
- Organize workshops and informal meeting where those already in business show others how to start a business.
- Assist grassroots groups that advocate for the rights of persons who have low incomes or other disadvantages - help them establish bookkeeping and other fiscal procedures that meet their needs; help the groups consider the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating.
- Assist nursing homes with an audit of their records.
- Assist in establishing sound business procedures for food co-op.
- Document practices of local businesses that discriminate against poor people; set up a mechanism for handling complaints.
- Organize a neighborhood credit union.
- Help people with limited incomes to utilize sound financial planning practices.

What is Service Learning?
- Sponsor workshops on fund-raising and organize activities to generate resources (e.g., a clothes sale, a yard sale, hot dog roast).
- Use contacts in government, business and in other local organizations to obtain funding and donations for community members (e.g., free use of facilities, transportation).
- Refer community members to groups that can provide technical assistance in organizing community business (e.g., the Small Business Administration).

Chemistry

- Assist in counseling of “substance-abusers.”
- Publish information about dangers of alcohol, nicotine and other drugs in a community newsletter.
- Study the effects of artificial foods on emotional and mental states.
- Work with community mental health cooperatives to plan to meet nutrition needs.
- Develop Rooftop vegetable gardens, community gardens, inexpensive methods of fertilization.
- Monitor levels of pollutants in local air and water; bring pressure on polluting industries to abide by regulations.

Computer Information Service

- Develop computerized learning modules for use by youngsters and adults with mental illnesses.
- Create a data processing format and analysis service for non-profit, community-based service agencies.
- Develop a community workshop on how to deal with computers: Straightening out mistaken billings, removing names from mailing lists, etc.
- Help youth from families with low incomes to explore careers in computer sciences.

Economics

- Encourage business and industries to open job positions to persons who have been chronically unemployed.
- Form a consumer protection service: publicize its availability to people who need it most; train others to investigate complaints about auto repair, insurance, medical care, deceptive credit practices and deceptive advertising techniques.
- Work to encourage consideration of needs of low-income people in local/regional economic development plans.
- Produce materials to help low-income families institute sound financial planning practices.
- Arrange training for people so they can qualify for better jobs (e.g., workshops on language skills, job-seeking techniques and job-related skills).
- Arrange workshops for potential employers to familiarize them with the skills of community members and encourage them to hire community members.
- Serve as a work referral agent for teenagers and others who want to work in the community.

What is Service Learning?
Education

- Arrange for retired persons to serve as learning resources for younger people.
- Work with local school board to develop educational programs appropriate to all community residents.
- Organize a program to provide needed educational experience to prison inmates.
- Tutor children with learning difficulties.
- Provide plant therapy, art therapy, exercise therapy in nursing home.
- Work with high school students to develop a plan to clean up the high school, to remove graffiti and to stop vandalism.
- Establish a life skills program for adults.
- Organize a tutoring center.
- Set up role playing sessions that will train and prepare community members for situations they will encounter in applying for services at a community agency.

Engineering

- Help increase the self-reliance of community cooperatives by building compost makers, solar energy panels or waste-recycling units.
- Develop devices for people with disabilities to help them achieve mobility.
- Design a typewriter for kids with cerebral palsy.
- Build a playground for people with special physical challenges.

English and Journalism

- Assist community groups with the preparation of a newsletter that publishes concerns and suggestions of community members.
- Utilize techniques of the folklorist to learn “folklore” of an area from longtime residents.
- Investigate forced retirement in your community and develop a series of news articles based on finding.
- Develop attractive, hard-hitting brochures for use with various kinds of outreach programs.
- Help the library increase its services to low-income neighborhoods.
- Establish an alternative community magazine.
- Develop a “Guide to Access Buildings” for the persons with special physical challenges.
- Establish an adult literacy project.
- Refer community members to public officials who can help them with their problems - this will involve compiling a directory of officials according to their areas of influence.
- Organize letter writing campaigns (including committees to write group letters to their political representatives).
- Assist community agencies with proposal writing.

Environmental Studies

- Investigate feasibility of developing solar heating for schools, community centers.
- Conduct survey of interior design needs of nursing homes.

What is Service Learning?
• Document incidence of lead-paint poisoning in low-income neighborhoods.
• Document violation of environmental quality regulations by local industries.
• Bring information about needs of low-income community to the attention of local mass trust authorities.

Fine and Applied Arts

• Use art therapy techniques in tutoring persons with mental illnesses.
• Plan to display work of community residents in community buildings.
• Design attractive pamphlets containing nutritional information as part of health division's educational efforts.

Foreign Languages

• Use translation skills to help new immigrants articulate needs.
• Work with local media to develop programs using foreign languages.
• Translate consumer information for speakers of foreign languages.
• Work as a bilingual aide in the public schools.
• Translate information concerning agency programs into languages or dialects common among community members.

Forestry and Horticulture

• Help community groups operate a vegetable garden on a previously vacant city lot.
• Organize "Outward Bound" experiences for city youth with special problems.
• Work through city parks bureau to involve residents of halfway houses in landscaping and maintaining parks and recreational areas.

Health and Recreation

• Plan illness prevention activities involving diet and exercise with community mental health center residents.
• Work with center staff to get funds from city parks and recreation department so activities can be provided for youngsters from families with limited incomes.
• Investigate adequacy of medical care available to those with mental illness.
• Document need for dental care in low-income neighborhoods.
• Plan health and nutrition activities that can be used in Head Start programs.
• Organize a community health fair.
• Gather data on needs of youngsters for vaccinations.
• Identify major health problems in the community and plan a comparing to educate community members about these concerns (e.g., diabetes, lack of needed immunizations, malnutrition).
• Help reorganize existing health programs to meet the particular needs of community members (e.g., extend their hours in the evenings and weekends, arrange for a mobile clinic.)

What is Service Learning?
History

- Document the history of a neighborhood or town using oral history techniques.
- Gather background on the history of treatment of low-income people in your city or state.
- Work with public organizations to establish displays that recognize the achievements and contributions of various ethnic groups to the culture of the area.
- Develop and publish a cultural journal that reports on unique aspects of the community.
- Develop ways to help children of various ethnic heritage's understand their own background and ancestry.
- Set up workshops to inform community members about the history of an issue and possible strategies for resolving the issue, so that they will be better able to evaluate the opinions and actions of local government officials.

Law

- Conduct workshops to inform people of their rights and legal remedies for their grievances.
- Operate a legal assistance program for persons with limited incomes or mental illnesses.
- Counsel (advise) non-profit community organizations on matters of liability, property ownership, incorporation.
- Provide paralegal assistance to minors.
- Provide support for groups who seek to prevent outlawing community-based treatment facilities and halfway houses in residential areas.
- Conduct “Street Law Classes” to familiarize residents of correctional institutions with the legal system and with their rights.
- Organize victim assistance programs.
- Provide aids such as transportation, baby-sitting and emotional support to witnesses of crimes whose lives may be disrupted by the need to testify.
- Develop a program of tenant education through researching the housing code, and rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. Make the information available to tenants and tenants’ groups.
- Study laws and regulations relating to nursing homes and other health care facilities for older persons; help willing administrators with matters of compliance.
- Assist grassroots groups with development of model utility regulations. Advocate to keep utilities from discontinuing services to the poor and older citizens.
- Set up a petition drive to show community support of a legal action.

Music

- Document local or indigenous folk music of an area.
- Develop music therapy programs for children with disabilities.
- Stage concerts or other musical performances at nursing and retirement homes.
What is Service Learning?

- Work with local musicians to find ways to provide music lessons to children who otherwise could not afford lessons.
- Raise funds to purchase instruments for children from families with limited incomes.
- Develop devices that help persons with arthritis or rheumatism to do such things as open food cans.
- Gather data that support excluding poor and retired citizens from planned utility rate increases.
- Develop solar heating systems for installation in retirement homes.
- Work with community groups to check and repair the wiring in homes of older people.

- Help citizens with physical disabilities travel to and from their polling places.
- Work with groups to lobby for legislation to meet older people’s needs.
- Help organize opposition to mandatory retirement policies in your college/university and in places or businesses in your community.
- Assist in the formation of neighborhood action groups: provide assistance to such groups as they make their needs known to appropriate governmental units.
- Organize an “awareness day” for community members during which activities are encouraged that promote a better understanding of community problems (e.g., ask community members to keep a record of what they learn during the day and publish the excerpts in a newsletter.

- Provide assistance to grassroots groups conducting research on the extent to which mental health care needs are being met in the community.
- Establish a crisis hotelmen or work with an existing one on its community outreach.
- Assist with programs that provide family counseling as part of a delinquency prevention program.
- Assist with programs that provide counseling for battered wives, husbands and children.

- Assist with counseling services for alcoholics.
- Work with grassroots groups to increase community acceptance of halfway houses.
- Work with a drug abuse clinic to counsel teenage drug users.
- Help recently released prisoners adjust to life through counseling, group meeting, problem solving.
- Establish a “clearinghouse” of volunteer services to direct clients to needed sources of assistance or help with research at existing Clearing houses.