

## **WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUTH VOLUNTEERS IN YOUR PARISH**

Are the youth affirmed as needed and capable in your parish? There are several issues to consider when reaching out to the youth in your parish. Just as with adults, youth are more likely to respond favorably if they receive a personal invitation. It is important that the request for service ministry matches their unique gifts and passions. Service areas that require shorter terms of commitment will especially appeal to the youth and assist them in fulfilling community service commitments.

Youth today are presented with multiple opportunities to do community service. Many youth participate in service learning. While helping others, particular emphasis is placed on the learning that occurs through the service. The service is often connected to classroom learning and students may receive academic credit for their participation. Schools frequently mandate community service as a part of their requirements for graduation. Check with your local school district to see if students attending schools near your parish can fulfill their community service at a church. This will vary depending on the local school system.

Is your parish youth friendly? Intergenerations working together are very different than groups of adult peers. Meetings that invite youth need to be willing to overlook potential biases regarding clothing, hairstyles, etc. Adults need to be open to sharing power with the youth and encourage the younger members to speak out and participate. The times and places that meetings are held might need to take into consideration the needs of the younger membership.

It will be important to provide young people with training, define roles within the group, and assist when transportation is difficult.

Be sure to appreciate the youth in the parish with visible signs such as certificates, special awards or perhaps a youth leadership day. Take pictures or videos and do a creative display in the parish gathering space, have a picnic, retreat, and be sure to include plenty of food!

Thank you's can be expressed on a regular basis by sending notes to parents, teachers, sending letters to the school papers, and signing validation for service paperwork for the schools.