

Service Scenarios

(Ideas to get you started)

1. New Immigrants:

There are problems in the nearby city with support services for new immigrants. These immigrants include people from East Asia, Central America and recently from Kosovo. They need training in English, preparation for citizenship tests, child care while they look for jobs, counseling for social services, etc. They also face discrimination in some areas. There is a social service center that provides an array of services and wants volunteers to help with tutoring.

Several also need short term housing and the center is looking for people to volunteer to take in families. There is also a separate immigrants' rights advocacy center that tries to design city and state legislation or get administrative solutions to address some of the discrimination problems. There are a small number of elected officials who are concerned about the social services of the area being flooded by immigrants and it affecting the taxes needed to support them.

2. School Violence

Following the shooting in Littleton, Colorado, a group has been formed to address school violence including parents, teachers, administrators and others in the community. They are creating school discussions, training peer counselors and conflict resolution facilitators and looking at additional activities. There is also a group that is working to have stricter gun control laws. One group is working to get the school board to add more security to the schools.

In the poorer neighborhoods where there is the greatest amount of school violence and some gang activity, there is organizing to get more neighborhood recreation facilities. This involves both looking for people to volunteer to do work in the centers (from rehab and painting to helping the coaches) as well as getting the city council to raise funds for them.

3. Hate crimes

In the last two years there have been incidents of public hostility to vulnerable populations: gay college students were harassed in the city; a state legislator was running for office (and elected) who focused criticism on immigrants and those still on welfare; and an abortion clinic was tear gassed. The issues are being discussed intensely in the newspapers.

There is a group that is working against hate crimes through public education and is looking for people to be speakers, to help organize public events on the subject, to help arrange book talk radio commentaries and generate articles and letters to the editor. The ACLU is providing legal assistance to victims and needs help in its office. There are bills before the legislature to broaden the definition of hate crimes and this effort needs lobbying help.

4. Hunger and Homelessness:

Amidst the general prosperity of the area, there are pockets of severe poverty. One in five children, nationally, are born into poverty. There are centers that feed the homeless and shelters that have great need for volunteers in serving, preparing and delivering food; providing childcare; raising funds.

There are allied organizations that are trying to increase public funding for these shelters which are running out of bed space. There is an organization working for a "living wage" ordinance to raise the minimum wage for all government workers and those working on government contracts. The Chamber of Commerce is opposed to this legislation.

5. Pollution:

The major river in the area has sections that are so polluted that swimming is not allowed and fish are dying (and lie smelling on the shore). Streams from the river have become used as garbage dumps (even though this is against the law). A major problem is agricultural runoff from the very large agribusiness farms in the next county. There is an environmental group that goes out on weekends to clean up the river, streams and beaches. There are groups lobbying for stricter regulation of the agricultural runoff. There is community outreach to "Save our Streams." The Farm Bureau is opposed to any new legislation in this area.