

## **Educating for Justice**

Education is a prerequisite to action. The following is a list of suggestions to effectively educate others in a variety of settings. These projects can be completed as a class, across a grade level, or may be applied to a parish or school-wide community.

### **Community Service Day**

Most Community Service is performed in isolation. Consider identifying issues or challenges in the community that could be addressed by an entire classroom, youth ministry program, grade level, or school. Students and staff first arrange to visit a CCHD-funded group or other community agency to learn more about their immediate needs. Students then spend a block of time at school or at their parish responding to this community need in direct response to agency requests. Through days of service or a service weekend, students devote themselves to working with the poor to advance social change.

### **Poverty Awareness Snacks**

Whether at nutrition break or lunch, students are hungry for snacks. Your class or group can satisfy their hunger while simultaneously raising money and awareness. Choose products that are easy to prepare and likely to sell. If your opportunities to sell are relatively infrequent, consider selling home made baked goods. Bagels and muffins are also a welcomed break from the usual candy, chips and donut fare. As you sell, use a poster backdrop or table signs to raise awareness of poverty in your community. Slips of paper highlighting an important statistic may also be included with each purchase. Donate the proceeds to programs that are committed to address the root causes of poverty in your community. Provide free snacks to the faculty and staff and tell them what you're doing. This publicity can go a long way to raise awareness.

### **EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community) Fair**

Organized through student government, individual classes, youth ministries or Confirmation programs, the objective of this project is to increase student awareness of poverty in their community. Lunchtime events can include a "Take-a-bite out of poverty" Bake Sale, informational booths, and a 1 in every 6 poverty raffle. Students dress up as grim reapers to represent the number of people who die from the effects of poverty in the United States and around the world. Balloons, buttons, banners, informational posters and kiosks made from old refrigerator boxes add to the environment.

### **CCHD Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest / Art Festival**

A school or parish-wide art contest is a powerful way to involve members of the entire community. The theme of the contest should promote awareness and encourage social action. Artworks can include photographs, sculptures, drawings, and paintings. Invite local elementary schools, parents, community members and the media to enjoy the event. Learn about CCHD's national contest at <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/youth.shtml#multimedia>.

### **Food Fast or Hunger Banquet**

A powerful way to increase student awareness of hunger – particularly hunger around the world – is to organize a Food Fast or a Hunger Banquet. Invite students, teachers, parents, community members and the media to this event. Donate proceeds to groups that address poverty in your community or your own student advocacy group. Find more information at Catholic Relief Services [www.foodfast.org](http://www.foodfast.org).

### **Student Poverty Leadership Conference**

The Student Poverty Leadership Conference teaches leadership skills to students from your school and can be expanded to include students from other schools as well. The theme of the conference can be EPIC (Ending Poverty in Community). As much as possible, the conference should be organized and presented by students and community members.

### **Community Lobby Day**

Similar to the Community Service Day, the Community Lobby Day could be an outstanding cross-curricular activity that blends civics, current events and Catholic Social Teaching. Students spend time researching current public policy issues that affect their local community, state or even the nation. Students arrange to visit elected officials either in their home offices or, if possible, at the state building or member office buildings in Washington, D.C. If travel is impractical, consider inviting an elected official or a member of their staff to your classroom or parish. Inform the member of your issue to raise their awareness, offer solutions and seek their support.

### **Pick a Charity: School or Parish Event**

Instead of devoting a day or weekend, students increase community awareness one event at a time. Based on a community needs analysis, students select a program or organization that they would like to highlight or support. Proper advertising will be essential. Use the PA system, bulletin announcements, flyers and posters. Canned food and money can be collected. Boxes and cans can be creatively decorated to draw attention to the important elements of the campaign. These actions can lead to social action.

### **Pick a Charity: Athletic Events**

Another variation of the above theme is to promote awareness through athletic events. Ask high profile faculty, students and parishioners to play basketball on a weeknight, as a double-header with a pre-scheduled game, or during half-time. If the game is played during a regularly scheduled event, pass cans around during the event. If it's a stand-alone event, sell tickets in advance. Invite members / organizers of the charity to attend as event VIPs.

Another variation is to sell raffle tickets during the first half of a basketball game. Randomly draw five names. Participants will have a chance to make a basket from the free throw line and/or the half-court line. Some of the proceeds go to participants who make shots. The remainder is given to the charity highlighted at the event.

### **Ribbon Week**

Provide ribbons, design t-shirts, distribute pencils, stickers, etc. to raise awareness about poverty in their community and challenge people to take action. Information booths, lunch activities, and special announcements can support the event.

### **Homecoming Activities**

Homecoming is a time for fun, games, and tradition. It's also a time to raise awareness of those who don't have a home. In addition to the festivities, sponsor a poster contest or an art contest that is designed to raise awareness of homelessness in your community. Partner with a CCHD funded group – particularly one that works to promote fair housing in your area.

### **Talent Night / Dances**

Talent Nights, Dances or virtually any student government, class or parish event can

help to educate others and raise awareness. The method can range from selecting justice oriented event themes to donating a portion of the proceeds to support social action causes. Posters, artwork, and informational flyers provide a discreet but powerful message.

### **Community Mural / Garden**

Devoting a wall or a portion of the school or parish to a mural or garden can serve as a symbol of the community's commitment to a particular theme or issue or as a more general statement about the community's mission regarding direct service or social action.

### **Days of Service**

Catholic Schools' Week, School-wide Service Fairs, Cinco de Mayo Fiestas, or Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Days of Service can be excellent opportunities to educate and to raise awareness. With direct service as the organizing context, participants can be encouraged to consider opportunities for social action.

### **Cross-Age / Community Presentations**

High school students can educate elementary school students, community members or parishioners about issues facing their community and opportunities for social action. Students can serve as remarkable emissaries and encourage people to look at issues in ways they may not have previously considered.