

CREATING A PARISH SUPPORT NETWORK

In addition to building a parish core team, we also recommend beginning a broader parish support network. Not everyone interested in assisting in the Year of Service will be able to serve as a core team member; however, they may like to receive news and updates and know when volunteer opportunities or related events occur. Perhaps your parish will discern that it wants to sponsor a diaper drive as part of the Year of Service, or that it would like to provide some sort of childcare service for moms taking night classes. These projects will need wider parish support and extend beyond the service the core team is able to provide on its own.

Establishing a parish support network early on will allow you to organically grow this resource throughout the Year of Service. This network can be a wonderful source of tangible and spiritual support to the parish leader and the core team. The following suggestions can help you create a network of support that can be called on as your parish efforts grow and expand. If your support network starts off quite small with just a handful of names, don't be discouraged. Interest will continue to grow as the project progresses and more updates and announcements are shared with the parish community throughout the year. Keep in mind, most of us have to hear about something several times before we take the plunge and sign up.

- **Create a contact list.**

Following the initial parish announcement about the *Year of Service*, you may receive a number of calls or emails from interested parishioners who were encouraged to reach out to you by a bulletin or pulpit announcement or during the Sunday homily. As you communicate with these parishioners, sharing information about the initiative and learning about their interests and the gifts they have to offer, be sure to capture their contact information and save it in a simple contact list. Make sure to get their full name, email address, and the best phone number at which they can be reached. During your conversations, make notes about their particular interests, passions, skills, and experience. Consider keeping these general notes in a section of your contact list. As the project moves forward, you may want to ask them for some type of specific assistance. Initially, this list can also provide you candidates to consider for the core team.

- **Send out regular updates.**

In order to keep up momentum and interest in the *Year of Service*, try to send out regular updates to your parish support network. Hearing from you once or twice a month will help members of your network feel connected and let them know that things are progressing. For example, send a quick note letting your network know that the parish inventory process is beginning with some details on what the process entails. At the outset, if you don't feel like you have much to share or report, consider sending out a quick prayer request. Invite the network to add a specific intention to their prayers throughout the month, allowing them to spiritually share in your parish efforts. Feel free to draft your own intentions or consider using the sample intercessions provided.

- **Expand your network by hosting a sign-up Sunday.**

If you would like to expand your parish support network, consider hosting a sign-up Sunday. This is a great way to share information about the *Year of Service* and encourage participation. Following all Masses on a particular weekend, enlist members of the core team to staff a table in an appropriate gathering area. Through personal, one-on-one invitations, encourage parishioners to join your parish effort by signing-up for the email list. As your efforts expand, this larger network can be a great resource. More details on hosting a sign-up Sunday can be found in Phase 2 on page 24.