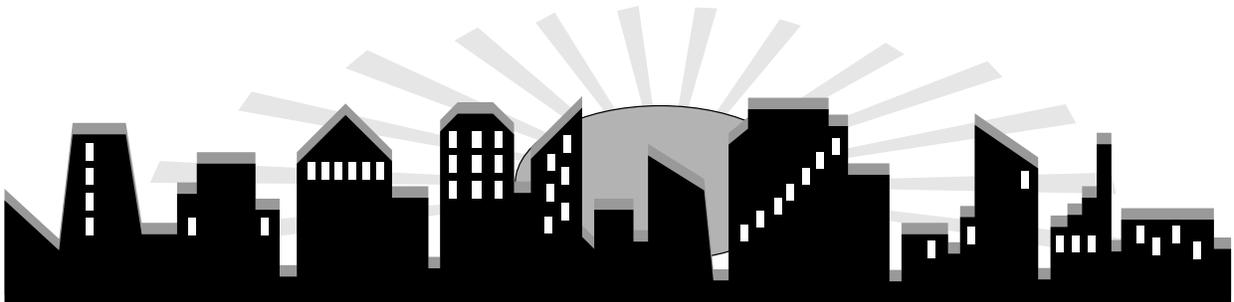


INTO THE STREETS

How to Plan a
Community Service Day Project
at Your School

Standing Committee on
Community and Public Health
American Medical Student Association

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How to Plan a Community Service Day Project
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INTO THE STREETS

What is *Into the Streets*?

Into the Streets (ITS) is a way for your medical school to get involved with the community. It is a one-day event that serves to orient students and faculty to the individual needs of the underserved population in your area. Participants join together in the morning to perform various service projects throughout the city. After a day of helping others, everyone returns to a central location to discuss how the day went, as well as how they can become more involved in the community in the future.

The Goal of *Into the Streets*

ITS has a two-fold purpose. First, it provides a one-day introduction to students and faculty about the needs and opportunities of the community at large. Second, it can begin a lasting relationship between medical schools and needy groups within the community. Through connections made during the initial ITS programming, a foundation is laid for helping various organizations throughout the year.

ITS benefits its participants in many ways. On an individual level it provides a sense of accomplishment by offering a structured way to volunteer within the community. On a larger level, ITS serves to better the image of the school and AMSA within the community. It has the potential to be a media event and this alone helps to gather the support of school administration.

History of *Into the Streets*

ITS was founded in 1991 with support from the Kellogg Foundation. It was originally a project of The Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL), a national non-profit organization that works with college students to develop community service programs. Currently, ITS occurs on hundreds of undergraduate campuses annually throughout the United States. Operating under the motto, "Try it for a day, you may love it for a lifetime," ITS provides a model for a one-day community service program aimed at encouraging people to volunteer within their communities.

In 1996, ITS was instituted at the Medical College of Ohio. A few students had heard of the project before and decided that medical students also needed encouragement and opportunities to become involved. The model that COOL provided was modified in order to provide the most benefit for medical and allied health students and faculty. In the spring of 1997, more than 150 students, staff and faculty gathered together to try and effect change within the community. The students participated in 17 different projects, and at the end of the day, everyone felt as though they had benefited from the experience. Students became aware of the many areas in town that

needed help, and since then, several have continued to volunteer at their sites on a regular basis. ITS is now an annual event at The Medical College of Ohio, and it celebrated its second year this spring.

What does a typical *Into the Streets* program look like?

12:00–12:30 Show up at a central location, meet your group and eat lunch.

12:45 Leave for project site.

1:15–5:30 Project.

Examples of projects:

- Plant trees at a hospice.
- Do gardening work for a senior center.
- Paint bunk beds for a family shelter.
- Babysit the kids at the battered women’s shelter; cook dinner so that the women have an afternoon off.
- Paint bedrooms at a transitional home for women and children.
- Bake for sick children and their parents at the Ronald McDonald House.
- Yard work for an elderly couple.
- Conduct a blood-pressure screening at a local senior center or mall.

6:00 Dinner and speaker. Discuss your experiences of the day and share how you felt.

This is just a sample. You could start the project in the morning and finish earlier, or schedule the day any way you choose. Projects are very dependent on individual community needs, as well as time of year and availability of volunteers. The opportunities are endless and can be tailored to the individual needs of your community.

How to run an *Into the Streets* program at your school

- ✍ **First, appoint a chairperson.** This person should be motivated and excited about doing something that will benefit your community and your school. The most important characteristic of a good chairperson is the ability to delegate. There are a lot of things that need to be done for ITS to run smoothly, and it is impossible for one person to do them all and still do well in school.
- ✍ Then the chairperson should hold a general meeting to recruit people for the **planning committee**. The following is a list of jobs that need to be done, and an example of how to divide the responsibilities:

Site Coordinators (minimum of two people)

- ❖ The site coordinators first job is to call their local United Way chapter. This is a great way to find out about different organizations in your community that may need help.
- ❖ Other places sources of information about who could use help are local churches, homeless shelters, senior citizen centers and health-care clinics aimed at providing for the indigent.
- ❖ Once a preliminary list has been established, it is time to start calling. You should anticipate needing one work site for every ten participants. This is an estimate, and the exact number will depend on the job that is to be done.
- ❖ When you call the individual locations, explain to them who you are and what you are trying to accomplish. NOTE: Avoid miscommunication about the day the project is going to occur. Some centers assume that you can come in anytime, and some projects are not conducive to weekends. Also, try not to let the director of a particular site bully you into doing something that you don't think is important or worth your volunteers' time. There are plenty of people who need help—you just need to search a little.
- ❖ Throughout the organizational stage, it is essential that the site coordinators remain in contact with the project sites. Things tend to change rapidly and it is important to have a few additional sites in mind in case one decides to cancel.
- ❖ This is a crucial job! Without the site coordinators, *Into the Streets* cannot happen.

Publicity Chairs (two people are sufficient)

- ❖ This is a perfect job for those perfectionist medical students who wish they were artists! It can be time consuming unless the person is computer proficient.
- ❖ The main goal of this job is to ADVERTISE to potential volunteers!

- ❖ The more you talk up the event, the more people will know about it. Enthusiasm goes a long way, so get out there with your posters and classroom announcements!

Sign-up Chairs (at least two, possibly, more if you plan to have a lot of involvement from other allied health students)

- ❖ The sign-up chairs have the job of convincing students that they want to devote a day of their lives to bettering the community instead of sitting in the library reading. Depending on the make-up of your school, this could be very difficult or very easy.
- ❖ This job does not require a huge time commitment until two weeks before the event. Set up a table in a visible location. Use balloons or colorful posters help attract people's attention, and have a bowlful of free candy to help to bring people close enough to the table to convince them to sign up.
- ❖ Sign-up sheets should be typed up ahead of time with the location and project to be performed. Remember that some projects may be limited as to how many people can participate, so make sure to keep an eye on which projects are full.
- ❖ During sign-ups, the chairs should either make announcements in class, or designate someone else to do so. This will target all those students who go to class but don't bother reading the flyers in their mailboxes!
- ❖ Once people are signed up, assign a project leader to each project. The project leader can be somebody from the steering committee, or just someone who wants to help out. A few days before the event, project leaders need to receive a list of all the people who are helping with their project and their phone numbers. The night before the project, leaders should call the participants on their list to remind them where and when they are to meet the following day.
- ❖ The enthusiasm of the sign-up chairs for the event will be the most effective tool for getting people to volunteer. Don't forget to smile a lot!

Staff Liaison (one person)

- ❖ The staff liaison is responsible for communicating with staff and faculty who may wish to participate. ITS is a perfect opportunity to facilitate interpersonal relationships between faculty and students by allowing everyone to get to know each other on another level.
- ❖ It is important to contact faculty early as calendars tend to fill up rapidly. One way to contact people is to put an advertisement in the hospital newsletter. If you prefer, you can go around to each department with an invitation.

Supplies & Food (one person)

- ❖ The first responsibility of this job is to begin calling around the community for food donations. The time of day you hold ITS will dictate the type of food you will need to provide. It is surprising how many people in the community are willing to donate food for a good cause. Some good places to ask include bagel stores, donut shops, pizza places and Chinese food restaurants. Grocery stores will often give a certificate which can be used for plates, napkins, drinks, etc.

- ❖ Make sure that arrangements are made concerning who will pick up the food on the day of the event.

- ❖ A few weeks before the event, the supplies person should check with the site coordinator and find out which sites will need supplies. Supplies might include the following: include: rakes, shovels and possibly even dirt for a gardening site; pots, pans, utensils and food for someone who is cooking at a shelter, etc.

Speaker (one person)

- ❖ This person is responsible for locating a speaker or planning a wrap-up discussion at the end of the day. This should be a good opportunity for everyone to come together and share their experiences. Depending on your school, a speaker might facilitate this process, or you might wish to direct the conversation yourselves.

Timetable

Now that you have a chair-person and a committee, it is time to start planning.

- ✍ **Set a date.** This is one of the first things that needs to be done. Make sure the day does not conflict with exams or any major school events.
- ✍ **Schedule any rooms** you need as far in advance as possible.
- ✍ **Have regular meetings.** The chairperson should prepare an agenda for the meeting so that it runs smoothly and as quickly as possible.
- ✍ **ADVERTISE!** This is a great chance for your school to get into the local papers or on broadcast news. Send press releases to everyone you can think of within the community. There is often someone at your school who is in charge of publicity and public relations—they can probably help you prepare a press release. If there is not, the AMSA public relations director can give you a hand. You can e-mail him at prel@www.amsa.org.
- ✍ **Be on top of the details.** As the day gets close at hand, make sure that everything is ready. This includes maps to all of the sites, lists of volunteers, and emergency plans in case of rain.
- ✍ **On project day:** The committee should show up early. A registration table needs to be set up with the lists of volunteers and their group leaders. If you have time, decorate the room so it looks a little friendlier. The food should be out and ready for people when they come so that they get to their project sites on time. As the volunteers arrive, tell them where their group is meeting. Give them a map and a schedule of the day.
- ✍ **Be excited!** After a lot of hard work, you and your committee have helped to make a difference in your community! Hopefully you have helped to institute something at your school that could become an annual event. Try to pass the information along to someone new who has enough enthusiasm to make the project even better the next year.

Who to contact when you have questions

If you have any questions on how to plan *Into the Streets*, or if you just want someone to bounce ideas off, feel free to contact the AMSA Standing Committee on Community and Public Health. You can reach the committee via AMSA's Web site at www.amsa.org. Or you can call Nancy Busse at the AMSA national office at (703) 620-6600, ext. 212, who can direct you to an individual on the committee.