Custom T-Shirts for Hospital Patients

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Technology students created custom-made, one-of-a-kind t-shirts for ventilator patients at Western Maryland Hospital Center. T-shirts were designed with the hobbies and preferences of individual patients in mind. Students used computer programs to design t-shirt transfers, used equipment to apply the transfers, and wrapped and tagged the shirts so that they could be delivered as gifts to the patients. Best practices:

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? Unique holiday gifts were provided for long-term, chronic care hospital patients on ventilators. We felt that chronic care patients were an overlooked population. Western Maryland Hospital Center's volunteer coordinator indicated that residents wear t-shirts all of the time, but often these shirts are donated by companies and are not what the patient would choose. Many of the patients have little or no family to give them gifts at the holidays. The patients at the hospital were very appreciative of the unique and personal holiday gifts.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? The technology curriculum requires students to utilize multiple resources to create innovative product's through "modules." One of the pieces of equipment that students use in the 7th grade class is the t-shirt maker. Students used multiple computer programs and the Internet to design t-shirts and edit pictures and other graphics. They used a Color-CAMM printer to print their designs onto iron-on-transfers. Then, they learned the proper safety precautions for using the commercial t-shirt iron and used it with adult supervision. Finally, students met writing and software use goals by creating holiday cards using Microsoft Publisher.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Student began the project by learning about the patients at the Western Maryland Hospital Center and how many of them came to be permanent residents. As they read about each patients "favorites," they began visualizing the patient receiving the completed shirt. As the project came to a close, students discussed what it would be like to be in a long-term hospital environment and predicted how their shirts might brighten the days of the patients.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students worked in pairs to design the shirts. Each pair was ultimately responsible for one patient's completed t-shirt, from start to finish. Student took turns utilizing equipment, some of which was very costly and needed to be handled with precision. Students maintained their own records for the project using the class Intranet page. Finally, students wrapped and tagged all packages. For some students, the wrapping was the most difficult part!

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? The project was done with the cooperation and support of: The Western Maryland Hospital Center and its

volunteer coordinator, Frederick County Public Schools' service-learning office (who helped to fund the purchase of the t-shirts), and several independent Color-CAMM printer dealers and businesses, who offered support and technical assistance when the printer broke down in the middle of the project!

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Students were trained in an overview of service-learning. They read articles and visited the website of the Western Maryland Hospital Center. Norm McGaughey, the technology teacher, worked with service-learning fellow, Meg Lee, to plan the project before it was presented to the students.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Students learned a great deal through this project. They completed the t-shirt creation module of the technology curriculum. They used the Internet and multiple kinds of software, and they learned how to use the Color-CAMM printer and the commercial t-shirt iron. Even more importantly, students learned how to work with a partner to complete a project with full responsibility for the end result. Finally, students learned about service-learning opportunities for further service, and compassion for those who are less fortunate.