

Vessels of Hope

By Cindy Ingram

The "Vessels of Hope" project was developed originally when Baltimore County required all art teachers to give seventh graders five student service-learning hours. Student watched a video "Hunger in Maryland" and we discussed how we could end hunger in our community. We looked at contemporary and traditional recycled art for inspiration. Students created their vessel using all recycled objects. After the "vessels" were completed, students "sold" their artwork to their families for two canned goods with the "hope" of feeding the hungry in our community for the holiday.

Meet a recognized community need: The project addressed two areas of need - the environment and hunger. The creating of the "vessels" was our way of using recycled objects to show that we care about the environment. The two canned goods that the students brought in helped feed hungry families during the holidays.

Achieve curricular objectives: Grade seven students are required to engage in five student service-learning hours in art. Students used research to compare and determine how culture and society influence artists. They also identified and applied appropriate attitudes and behaviors necessary to create artworks as individuals and in groups.

Reflect through the service-learning experience: My students answered questions after the video. We had some discussion about hunger in our community. I felt that the students gained an understanding of how close hunger really is to them! After we made our "vessel" the students wrote a letter to a friend describing what they did from start to finish and how they helped end hunger in our community.

Develop student responsibility: The student had to bring in the required canned good in order to complete the project. Most of the students took home their vessel and "sold" them for the canned goods to their parents. This was our way of letting the parents know what we were doing. A letter was sent to parents describing the activity and its outcome.

Establish community partnerships: The students knew that they were helping someone in our community even though they were not told the names of the families. Our school guidance counselor obtained the names of the families in need.

Plan ahead for service-learning: I wanted to create a lesson that tied in recycled objects, art made from found objects, and community service. The video was obtained from the Maryland Food Committee.

Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service: Students developed a sense of responsibility to help in their community, improved self-esteem, fostered better relationships with their peers, and developed character and leadership skills. The academic benefits from implementing this project included: meeting goals and objectives for the art curriculum, increasing the awareness of important school sponsored activities, and making the student aware of the connection between life experiences, and the school community.