

John R. Marsh Cancer Center Walk-a-Thon

By Larry Myers

Meet a recognized community need: The entire 7th grade at Smithsburg Middle School (232 students) took on and completed a very energetic service-learning project. They completed a 6K walk-a-thon at Antietam National Battlefield to raise money for the John R. Marsh Cancer Center in Washington County Maryland. It was not just a walk-a-thon though, the students took ownership of the project from beginning to end, and that is what made it so unique! On a beautiful October day we completed our walk and in November the students presented a check for over \$2,500.00 to the cancer center.

Achieve curricular objectives: The curricular objective in grade 7 is community service so our team decided to have the students become involved in a meaningful way. Social studies classes mapped out the route we would walk. Science classes determined the amount of calories burned while walking, and the math classes collected and counted the money received.

Reflect through the service-learning experience: Language art classes composed a reflection packet for all students to complete. All participants completed the reflection activities after the walk.

Develop student responsibility: Three organizations were invited to the school to give presentations to the students. Language art classes composed letters of invitation to these groups. Students voted on which agency would receive the funds from the walkathon and began collecting pledges.

Establish community partnerships: The three community agencies that came to our school presented information to our students on their missions, client base, etc. Based on those presentations, students ultimately decided to sponsor the John R. Marsh Cancer Center through the walkathon.

Plan ahead for service-learning: We began planning about two months before the walk by selecting agencies to invite, sending out invitations, arranging to hold our walkathon at Antietam and planning out the walk route, etc.

Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service: Students learned about community agencies, cancer, fundraising and event planning.