

## **Holiday Gift Packaging and Distribution for the Salvation Army**

### **By Cheyanne Zahrt**

#### ***Best Practice 1: Meet a recognized need in the community***

During the holiday season there are many families throughout the Baltimore Area who are in need of gift and food assistance. The Salvation Army helps people throughout the year through public assistance programs, food banks, and student development summer camps and programs. Throughout the holiday season they step it up and provide gifts and food to families who would normally not have a Christmas at all.

#### ***Best Practice 2: Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning***

While the students completed the service-learning project, they were able to use their critical thinking and organizational skills to pack and distribute hundreds of holiday gift bags. The organizational skills that they used in this activity are similar to the curricular objectives in the science classroom.

#### ***Best Practice 3: Reflect throughout the service-learning experience***

The students reflected informally while they were packaging the gifts on December 14, 2004. We reflected as a group during the lunch break. I had the students determine one thing that they learned from the activity as well as one thing that they did not enjoy or something that they would like to change. The students also completed a written reflection after the activity was completed. Many of the students participated in the distribution of the gifts on December 21, 2004 where they did similar reflection.

#### ***Best Practice 4: Develop student responsibility***

The students have to be individually responsible. They are in charge of a specific task and making sure that they organize their time and delegate jobs to each other in order to complete the task. The students work very closely with members of the community. They developed customer service strategies that they used to interact with the people who were receiving gifts from The Salvation Army.

#### ***Best Practice 5: Establish community partnerships***

I have led many students in various service-learning activities. The Holiday Gift Packaging and Distribution activity gave the students an opportunity to see people who have financial need. It also gave them the ability to work with their fellow community members. It opened up the possibility for these students to work and volunteer with the organization in the future.

#### ***Best Practice 6: Plan ahead for service-learning***

I have worked with The Salvation Army for the past two years in developing this project. Each year I instruct a group of students in this project. We have increased the activity by going for an additional day and collecting gifts to distribute to the children. The students ask about the project in the beginning of November and they have actually started to make the individual contacts on their own. I worked very closely with Peggy Vick from The Salvation Army. She and I communicated throughout the year to plan this activity and to work together to plan additional activities with The Salvation Army.

#### ***Best Practice 7: Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service***

Prior to traveling to The Salvation Army, I meet with the students and we discussed what the students would be doing. I informed them that they would be working with people from the community as well as Autistic students from Loyola to package and distribute the gifts. We discussed the issue of economic diversity and the importance of making sure that we

help others who are in financial need. Lastly, I used pamphlets from The Salvation Army to explain their mission and purpose.