

Community Service Projects Allow Institutions to Give Back While Building Camaraderie Among Employees

Higher education institutions are inherently linked to the communities and cities in which they reside, and giving back to these communities and cities (and the people who live and work there) is often part of a college or university's mission.

Some of this "giving back" occurs in the form of days of service or ongoing community service projects. These projects provide an avenue for institutions to not only show their appreciation for their hometowns and



Agnes Scott College employees work on a Community Day service project

the people who make up their communities, but also foster a sense of kinship, engagement and institutional pride among employees who participate. Service projects don't have to be elaborate or expensive or time consuming

— simply spending an afternoon picking up litter at an area park or holding a food or clothing drive once per year speaks volumes about a college or university's commitment to its community.

Highlighted below are four institutions' community service programs. While these particular programs are designed for employees, many institutions also provide opportunities for employees and students to work together, and most student groups participate in their own form of community service. Each is unique in its own right; all are incredibly popular with employees; and in all of these programs, human resources plays an integral role.

Community Day at Agnes Scott College

The mission of Agnes Scott College is to "educate women to think deeply, live honorably and engage the intellectual and social challenges of their times."

The college is deeply committed to teaching students the importance of engaging with their communities, and Community Day is a tangible example of that commitment and is a time that the college can lead by example in providing services to those in need or to the benefit of the community.

The college's annual Community Day fosters a spirit of kinship among Agnes Scott employees and takes this spirit into the broader Atlanta/Decatur community. Faculty and staff members, along with college administrators, gather for breakfast on campus and then spend the morning in small groups volunteering at local nonprofit organizations. These volunteers then return to the campus in the early afternoon for lunch and to share their most meaningful experiences. A variety of team-building activities takes place on the campus in the afternoon.

Employee commitment to Community Day is strong. In 2010, staff participation was approximately 70 percent.

Faculty participation is growing — from 1 percent in the first year that faculty was invited to participate to 16 percent in 2010. In recent years, trustees of the college have also joined in, providing a wonderful opportunity for members of the faculty and staff to interact informally with trustees.



Johns Hopkins University President Ronald J. Daniels (l) and Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Andrés A. Alonso (r) read to students at Barclay Elementary/Middle School

In addition to the college-wide Community Day, Agnes Scott policy also allows each employee to take one day of paid leave annually for community service.

HR's Role: The Agnes Scott Community Day Planning Committee is chaired by the director of human resources. Committee members represent different divisions across the Agnes Scott campus, and two faculty members now serve on the committee. The Planning Committee does its work through sub-committees so that no one individual has an excessive amount of work and everyone has a role. Sub-committees plan the volunteer service activities, the breakfast and lunch, solicit donations for prizes and financial support, and plan games and activities. Under HR's leadership, the planning and implementation of Community Day has become seamless, effective and efficient.

Johns Hopkins Takes Time for Schools

Under the leadership of Johns Hopkins University President Ronald J. Daniels and the chief executive officer of Baltimore City Schools, the university's human resources and community affairs departments worked with the school system to develop the Johns Hopkins Takes Time for Schools program in 2009, launching it on March 3, 2010. The program is a service partnership aimed at providing support and assistance to Baltimore City Schools (BCS) while providing faculty and staff an avenue for community service, offering their talents to the city's youth and improving the administrative and educational capacities of the area's school system.

Participants can serve in many capacities including direct student support, management and leadership advice, or facilities and infrastructure improvement. Johns Hopkins University (JHU) staff members are eligible for up to two work days of paid service leave annually. In the first year of the program, 143 faculty and staff members participated. Also in the first year, the program provided 14 percent of all the city school system's volunteers.

HR's Role: JHU human resources took the lead in designing the Johns Hopkins Takes Time for Schools program and in developing the policy granting employees time off to volunteer. A task force of BCS and university HR staff worked to align the program's goals with needs of the school system. A data tracking system and participation guidelines were established. Participants are required to sign in and out of their service site on a computer kiosk located at each school. The computer kiosk records service time in a JHU/BCS partnership database and tracks all JHU participation. This information is shared with and managed by JHU's

Office of Work, Life and Engagement and overseen by the vice president for human resources. HR also financed the computers used in the school kiosks; oversees the day-to-day management of the program on the university's side; and assumed responsibility for the internal and external communication of the program.



For the past two years, attendees of the CUPA-HR annual conference have had the opportunity to participate in a service project the day before the conference kicked off. Dubbed CUPA-HR Cares, this event is intended to enable us to give back to the cities that host our annual conferences. In 2010, we were in New Orleans, where we partnered with HandsOn New Orleans to assemble children's desks and chairs that were then distributed to local families in need and to paint pre-drawn college logo murals that were hung in area public schools to inspire and encourage youngsters to work toward college. This year in Orlando we partnered with Clean the World to sanitize, grind and package used soap products for shipment to homeless shelters across the United States and impoverished countries worldwide. And for the three days we were in Orlando, we arranged for the conference hotel to collect all gently used amenities from the entire hotel on behalf of our conference attendees. Those amenities were then recycled at the Clean the World facility and distributed to those in need.

Thanks to corporate partners TIAA-CREF and HigherEdJobs for helping to make the CUPA-HR Cares events possible. Stay tuned for details on what we've got lined up for Boston in 2012, and if you're coming to the conference, we hope you'll plan to join us!

Relay for Life – Southeastern Louisiana University

Relay for Life is an annual event of the American Cancer Society held on the campus of Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU) every November. The goal is to raise money and awareness to benefit cancer patients and research. Several SLU campus divisions coordinate their own Relay for Life campaigns each year. Following is an overview of the division of administration and finance's 2009 and 2010 campaigns.

2009 Campaign: The HR analyst and the director of campus card operations served as co-chairs for the division of administration and finance (A&F)'s 2009 campaign. The co-chairs then recruited one employee from each A&F department to be a team member, and each team member committed to having their own individual fundraisers with the goal of raising at least \$100. The A&F team as a whole also planned a campus-wide "Family Night"-themed raffle and collected donations of money and theme-related gifts from all departments within the division.

This provided initial ownership of the efforts by all A&F employees and encouraged participation, regardless of how big or small a contribution was.

Employees donated DVDs, board games, and, with the monetary donations it received, the team was able to purchase a Wii game system and a gift certificate for a popular local restaurant. Thanks to the raffle, a bake sale, and a couple of other fundraisers, the A&F division raised \$6,690 for Relay for Life in 2009.

2010 Campaign: The HR analyst and the director of campus card operations again served as co-chairs of A&F's 2010 campaign. Thanks to the excitement over the New Orleans Saints winning the Super Bowl in January 2010, tickets to a Saints game were the perfect hot-ticket item for the campaign's theme, which was "Barbecue and Tailgating." When Relay for Life developed a tee shirt that utilized Louisiana's symbol of a fleur-de-lis in the Saints' colors of black and gold with a touch of purple for cancer awareness (called the Fight Dat tee shirt), the division's fundraising efforts were streamlined to just a raffle and tee shirt sales (with fewer individual departmental fundraisers). For the 2010 campaign, the A&F division raised \$9,148.



Members of Southeastern Louisiana University's division of administration and finance (and their family members) on Relay for Life race day

HR's Role: In addition to a human resources team member co-chairing the administration and finance division's campaign for the past two years, HR also was instrumental in the Relay for Life campaign in other

ways. All 17 HR department employees participated in the campaign in both 2009 and 2010, and HR held its own separate fundraiser both years. HR also provided administrative support for the A&F division's campaigns, overseeing the accounting for all money raised in the division and distributing e-mails updating the division about upcoming events and progress.



Valencia College employees spread mulch at Moss Park

Learning Day – Valencia College

Learning Day is a college-wide event designed to provide an opportunity for Valencia employees to come together and collectively focus on the college's learning-centered mission. Learning Day 2011 differed from past Learning Days in two ways. First, the event was expanded from

what had traditionally been an internal day of learning delivered in a conference-style format into an opportunity to give back to the community. Second, an invitation was extended for the first time to all part-time and adjunct employees to attend this day of learning, service and celebration. The result? More than 1,000 Valencia employees turned out to provide much needed assistance in 15,050-acre Moss Park, one of Central Florida's largest natural recreation areas and wildlife sanctuaries.

Through a wide variety of service projects (which were led by both traditional and non-traditional leaders from the college) ranging from “no exertion” to “medium-high exertion” levels, employees worked to clean, beautify and make the park more safe and enjoyable for the individuals, families and groups who visit there. Projects included filling pot holes; removing invasive species of plants around the park; working on nature trails; landscaping; cleaning playground equipment; cleaning and refinishing picnic tables, fire rings and grills; making bracelets, puzzles and toy models for local children who visit the park; and more.

Learning Day 2011 provided Valencia employees an opportunity to showcase their skills and provide assistance and leadership in ways they never have before. The experience of community service not only helped to transform Moss Park, but also gave employees a deeper sense of commitment by engaging in meaningful working relationships outside of their normal roles at the college, thus strengthening connections, creating new pathways and establishing an even greater level of dedication among Valencia employees.

HR's Role: The office for organizational development, a division of the human resources department, created the design and format of Learning Day 2011. The organizational development team acted as the project manager and was responsible for logistical planning, including transportation, establishing agendas and creating timelines; designing marketing materials; coordination between multiple departments; and communication with internal and external support teams and sponsors of the event. 

CUPA-HR National Office Day of Service



On November 8, CUPA-HR's 24 Knoxville, Tennessee-based employees ditched their typical workday routines to head out into the local community for a day of service. We split up into three teams, with one team cleaning up area sidewalks and roadways with Keep Knoxville Beautiful; one team building sheds for Habitat for Humanity; and one team sorting and labeling cans of food at a local food bank. Although the national office has for some time been supporting local nonprofits by collecting items for animal shelters, homeless centers and food banks, this is the first year we've gone out as a group into the community to lend a hand. We had a blast, and plan to make this an annual event!

