

Vietnamese Friendship Association

VFA Service Corp- Pilot High School Service Learning Program

2009-2010



Program Report and Evaluation

Prepared by:

Klarrisa Frank, Program Coordinator

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7101 MLK Jr. Way S Suite #212, Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 760-1573

Summary: VFA's pilot service learning program for high school youth, VFA Service Corps, successfully completed its first year. The program began with training on Saturday, October 24, 2009 and ended on June 10, 2010. The intention of VFA Service Corps was to build upon VFA's current after school program by adding a volunteer aspect so that high school youth could complete their 60 service learning hours as required by Seattle Public Schools and grow in developmental assets as well.



Service Corps members were recruited from a variety of local high schools, but mainly from existing relationships within VFA's after school program.

I. Program Design:

This program provided three main avenues for high school youth to become involved with the local Seattle community and VFA: volunteering with the after school program, outside service projects, and regular meetings.

a. After school program

The main component of VFA Service Corps was having the youth serve in VFA's after school program, Junior Educational Assistance for Student Empowerment (EASE), for K-5th students at least once a week. The program ran Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 3:30-5:30 pm at New Holly Learning Center. They spent the first hour assisting students with homework or tutoring them in subjects that needed extra assistance. The second hour was devoted to an activity created by the coordinator and led by the service learners. This gave Service Corps members experience

in leading groups and a chance to develop communication skills.



The original intention was to have the service learners create the activities.

However, this proved challenging because their schedules with school and other extracurricular activities offer little to no extra time to perform extra work outside the program. This left after school

program planning up to the coordinator and eventually an assistant coordinator.

b. Service projects

The second part of the program revolved around community service projects. As a pilot program, VFA Service Corps worked at partnering with local organizations for service projects this year. The first project of the year took place in



December 2009 at the Matt Griffin YMCA in SeaTac. Several Service Corps members and 2 program staff planned and conducted a cultural workshop focused around making Vietnamese spring rolls, a delicious way for youth to share their cultures while learning how to plan a project.

Service Corps members also contributed their time to VFA's other programs including the Parent Advocacy program and the Community Action Research and Empowerment (CARE) Project. At several Parent Advocacy workshops, Service Corps members helped provide childcare services for parents attending the workshops. A couple Service Corps members also attended CARE's first community forum to provide



childcare support and also provide their feedback to the forum.

Other projects included planning for VFA's Tet Celebration party at New Holly Gathering Hall and volunteering with Campfire at Cascade Bicycle Club's Convention.



c. Meetings and Mentoring

The last aspect of the program was intended for regular meetings to build relationships and train the high school youth. The beginning of the year began with regular meetings on Mondays. However, after a few weeks the attendance at the meetings began to fall. Most of the time, students had other conflicting commitments with school and other activities. Once attendance dropped entirely, the coordinator was forced to be more creative in engaging the youth.

Members began receiving one-on-one mentoring meetings with the program coordinator, and occasionally outings with other service learners through teambuilding and educational activities. These included trips to local universities, meals together, and activities before or after a service project. This allowed time for the coordinator to mentor the students, build relationships, and gain feedback on the after school program and community service projects.

It is not recommended to have meetings unless a direct benefit for the students is created. This could be in the form of a meal, incentive system, or other tangible benefit. Meetings could also be a mandatory requirement in order to volunteer (and gain service learning hours) in the after school program.

II. Demographics of Clients Served

Our program's total enrollment consisted of 30 registered students in K-5th and 10 registered high school volunteers.

a. Service Corps Members

- i. High Schools Represented: Ingraham, Roosevelt, Cleveland, Franklin
- ii. Grade Range: 10th grade to 12th grade

- iii. According to UWKC forms:
 1. 100% identify as Asian
 2. 70% live in zip code 98118
 3. 8 males, 2 females
 4. 50% were new arrivals and/or immigrants
 5. 60% live in households with very low or low income households

b. Junior EASE

- i. Schools represented:
- ii. Grade Range: Kindergarten through 5th grade
- iii. According to UWKC forms (of the 20 fully filled forms):
 1. 100% identify as Asian
 2. The main zip codes represented: 98118, 98108
 3. 11 males, 9 females
 4. Only 30% were new arrivals and/or immigrants
 5. 80% live in households with very low or low income households

III. Partnerships

- **Vietnamese Friendship Association:** Administration and implementation of program
- **South Seattle Community College:** Discounted facility rental rates.
- **P-Patch:** Provided weekly hands-on learning of science through gardening for students grades K to 5
- **Lois Brewer at Seattle Public Schools:** Lois Brewer offers support to service learning programs that involve Seattle Public Schools' students, including a service learning training for coordinators
- **Matt Griffin YMCA** in Sea Tac for first community project
- **Campfire** for second community service opportunity



IV. Accomplishments

- **Service Learning hours:** We received over 545 volunteer hours from high school volunteers.

- **Attendance:** Our program's total enrollment consisted of 30 registered students in K-5th and 10 registered high school volunteers.
- **Direct Service Hours:** The after school program provided over 164 hours of direct service.
- **Grant Success:** \$1000 grant from King County
- **Tet Celebration:** Planned and led by high school youth and college staff, held at the New Holly Gathering Hall, we provided games, food, and celebration to over 150 students, parents, and community members. It was our biggest Tet event yet!

V. Problems Encountered

- Low attendance in the fall and winter by Service Corps members and after school participants because of early nightfall. During this time in Seattle, darkness falls as early as 4:30 pm preventing parents from allowing their children to participate in some extracurricular activities
- Low attendance due to more active after school programs at elementary schools
- The program coordinator had little experience in running an after school program for elementary school students, so it eventually proved necessary to hire an assistant to help with that portion so that the coordinator could focus on Service Corps members
- The program coordinator also had no Vietnamese language proficiency which was a hindrance with the after school participants because their parents mainly spoke Vietnamese. It also made it more difficult to recruit newly arrived Vietnamese high school youth to serve in the program.



VI. Program Evaluation

At the end of the program, 10 high school Service Corps members were asked to fill out surveys on their overall experience in the program. Their feedback should be used to improve the program in future years. Below is a summary of their feedback:

- a. All of them agreed or strongly agreed with these statements:
 - i. I care about the well-being of my fellow community members.

- ii. I see needs in my community and want to address them.
 - iii. I see a connection between service learning and my community.
 - iv. I feel that my service learning was useful to my community.
 - v. I learned valuable skills as a service learner.
 - vi. Overall, I enjoyed service learning with the VFA.
 - vii. I plan to do service learning with the VFA again.
- b. 70% of them had performed service learning with other organizations in the last 6 months, including: Seattle Center, Key Club, Churches and/or Temples, Community Centers, senior retirement home, UBLC, TADD, City Year City Heroes
 - c. 60% believed there should not be weekly meetings. The 40% that said there should be weekly meetings commented: that they would feel more committed if the meetings were a requirement for the program, the meeting should only be for newcomers, and depends on schedule conflicts.
 - d. 80% believed that the VFA should provide more community service projects. Ideas included: outdoor volunteering and opportunities to connect to the Vietnamese community

VII. Future Recommendations

Since this was a pilot program, there are a variety of different ways this program could be changed to make it more effective. Below are a few key changes that could be made.

- There are couple different restructurings that could take place:
 - The entire EASE program could be put under the control of the EASE



Coordinator (K-High School). This would allow the Service Learning Coordinator to focus on recruiting volunteers for the Junior EASE, creating a solid team, and working on coordinating service projects.

- The Junior EASE could be terminated and the focus could be solely on middle and high school.
- Continue partnering with other organizations for community projects. There's plenty that can be done together as a community!
- Have high school students more involved with VFA in other aspects of the organization. They could receive training in marketing, accounting,

event planning, administrative tasks, etc. Some high school interns complained that children were not their passion, so this would give them other opportunities to explore.

- If the Junior EASE program stays under the Service Learning Coordinator position, hire someone with experience in classroom management skills
- Recruit a Vietnamese coordinator. For this to be a true leadership opportunity for Vietnamese/Asian youth, it would be great to have someone of a similar cultural background as a leader.
- Recruit early and often for the Junior EASE program. Hang posters at New Holly, talk with morning and evening ESL classes (talk to SSCC coordinator about visiting classes), post ad in Vietnamese newspapers
- Consider a calendar change if a VISTA is in charge of program. Program could begin in January, which gives them plenty of time to plan, recruit, and prepare.
- Focus the after school program activities on Vietnamese culture. There was a previous program at VFA called Navigating Vietnam. There is the opportunity to combine this program with Junior EASE. This gives it more appeal to parents versus the school program tailored to all children.

