

Leadership Cambria County
The John B. Gunter Community Leadership Initiative

Summary of Team Projects 2004-2009

The community projects undertaken by the participants is a critical component of their leadership experience, providing real-life experience in teamwork, resource management and community leadership. The beauty of projects undertaken by the participants is that it is their opportunity to create whatever they want to make our region a better place to live and work. This critical component of the program continues to net impressive results annually.

2004

Girls Matter

This team put together a half-day program for girls enrolled in grades 6-8 at Greater Johnstown Middle School. The day was geared toward empowering the girls to feel not only physically but emotionally safe, giving them an opportunity to connect with role models and community resources. There were demonstrations on self defense and speakers on topics like boundaries and self-esteem. Each girl in attendance received a "Girls Matter" t-shirt and a gift bag with products associated with the day's theme. The project was picked up by the Girl Scouts of Talus Rock Council and has been very popular the past two years.

What's Happening Johnstown

This team created a website that was meant to promote our area and all of its recreational and entertainment opportunities. A team the following year picked up the project and expanded on the site. The site was active until early this year.

Regional Leadership Initiative

This team conceived the concept of a joint session for leadership programs in the region. The inaugural session was held in Johnstown and included the programs from Bedford, Blair and Somerset Counties, with networking opportunities and speakers from each county. The project was picked up by the leadership program directors in each county, and the fourth such program will be held in Johnstown in 2007. The regional initiative has expanded to include Huntingdon County, with the possibility of Centre County joining the committee in the future.

Putting Recreation on the Map

This team created a reproducible CD that promoted recreational resources and attractions within Cambria County that can be enjoyed during the winter months. The CD has been used by the Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority to help increase awareness of this important aspect of our quality of life.

First Responders Task Force

This team worked to bring an award-winning program to the region that combines the strengths of local, federal, military and academic emergency services organizations. The program was intended to result in a more unified and coordinated response capability to major incidents. With emergency service partners regularly working closely together, their combined abilities give the region access to more emergency support capacity than could be provided via conventional or traditional relationships. The groundwork that was laid with this project will be expanded with the building of county-wide wireless internet service.

Youth Wellness

In 2006, school districts nationwide were required to begin complying with specific USDA health and wellness guidelines. This team helped the districts prepare by developing a comprehensive resource tool for area school administrators that addresses topics related to nutrition, exercise and wellness. The team consulted with several organizations including local school districts; Child/Adolescent Health and Wellness Council; Galliker Dairy Company; US Food Service; Metz School Dining Services; USDA and PANA. The resource guide was distributed to every school district in Cambria County and Northern Somerset County.

Trailways to Your Future

Graduating from high school can be liberating – and a little frightening. To help young adults navigate a post-high school world, this team developed a pilot project that gives high school students access to the resources that can help them achieve their goals. The group assembled and packaged information to hand out to students, including financial aid checklists and tips for completing federal loan applications. The group organized several school assemblies and attended job and college fairs.

What's Happening Johnstown Search Engine

This team took the project created by 2004's "What's Happening Johnstown" project to the next level by creating a marketing plan and aggressively marketing it to area residents and local businesses.

2006

Trail Runners – ATV Youth Day

All-terrain vehicles are popular recreational outlets for area youngsters. They can also be dangerous if riders don't know the safety guidelines. This team secured a \$5,500 grant from Polaris along with the support of many local sponsors and organized a Safety All-Terrain Vehicle Youth Day at the 6,000-acre Rock Run Recreation Area near Prince Gallitzin State Park. The training was based on the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Safety course and included the opportunity for children to ride in a supervised environment. The event was a huge success, with more than 100 children aged 8-16 taking part. The group also organized a "train the trainer" day that was held a week before the youth day. This project is continuing in 2007.

Kidding Around 2006

Sometimes it's tough to be a kid. With this in mind, this team created a project to make the lives of 35 disadvantaged children a little brighter. Working with New Day, Inc., the group organized a day of fun at Laurel Ridge State Park, including pony rides, face painting, a presentation by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, a bouncy obstacle course, gymnastics lessons, kickball and a cookout. The day was enormously successful and generated interest on the team for becoming New Day volunteers. This project is continuing in 2007.

Johnstown Film & Wine Festival

In partnership with the Johnstown Area Heritage Association (JAHA), this team organized the First Annual Johnstown Film & Wine Festival. The committee received 51 submissions, including animation, drama, comedy, horror, documentaries and experimental techniques. The project involved screenings and a juried selection process. Films were shown at the Johnstown Flood Museum's theater on July 13 and 14, and both nights were standing-room only. Just 300 hundred tickets were available for the screening of the winning films in the courtyard at the Heritage Discovery Center on July 15 – all tickets were sold and there was a waiting list of about 30 people who were sold standing-room only tickets. The event exceeded all expectations and generated a great deal of positive publicity. JAHA intends to continue organizing the event. This project is continuing in 2007.

RidgeTech

This team pooled their professional resources and worked with Atlantic Broadband to install a wireless broadband transmitter in Johnstown's Central Park, creating a wireless hotspot right in the heart of Johnstown's Central Business District. The transmitter went live in early May and has seen steady use of the service not only from local residents and business people but from visitors in town for events such as Thunder in the Valley. This project is continuing in 2007.

The Posey Project

Like any urban area, Johnstown has patches of land that can use some TLC. With that in mind, this team worked with the City of Johnstown to locate and beautify a vacant parcel at the foot of the Inclined Plane. This project is continuing in 2007.

2007

Junior Achievement Volunteer Recruitment

This team created a comprehensive volunteer recruitment plan for the local Junior Achievement office. In addition to creating a professional presentation for the staff, this team also worked very hard to recruit volunteers from within their own organizations and circle of contacts while opening doors for the Junior Achievement staff to make their presentation to the largest employers in our region. The team has successfully filled Junior Achievement's slate of volunteers for the fall 2007 semester.

Project Playground

This team completely renovated the Park Avenue Playground in the Moxham section of Johnstown. The park had been all but destroyed, with basketball hoops torn down, benches torn apart, cracked asphalt and missing fences. The team took an aggressive approach to garnering community support and raising funds to repair the playground, including installing four new basketball courts, including one with kid-friendly hoop heights, new fencing, new asphalt and a beautiful new picnic pavilion. They held a grand reopening of the court with a three-on-three youth basketball tournament and a fundraiser for "Nothing But Nets" which supplies mosquito nets to malaria-stricken communities in Africa.

Rock the Vote

This project is geared toward the 18–25 year-old demographic. Its purpose is to inspire young adults to get involved in the political process – most importantly, by becoming informed about the candidates and their stand on the issues and finally, encouraging them to exercise their right to vote. Slated for November 2007, this team is partnering with local political parties and nationally-recognized entertainers to create an event that will make a real impact on this age group.

Torchbearers: Regional Success Stories – A Lecture Series

The Torchbearers Lecture Series is slated to begin in September 2007. It is a series of four lectures designed to highlight success stories from regional leaders who have made their mark in our area. The proceeds from ticket sales and sponsorships will benefit The Challenge Program.

2008

709 Project

This team worked with a non-profit arts center to provide a safe haven for area youth and encourage participation in the creative arts. The team helped to bring the building up to code, performed a SWOT analysis and prepared a marketing plan for the center's board of directors. They also coordinated a successful grand opening that attracted over 250 people and raised almost \$17,000 for the project. The team continued to work with the venue's board of directors after the conclusion of the program.

Junior Leadership Program

This team worked with Greater Johnstown High School to develop a leadership program for sophomores that would focus on by providing skills and decision-making resources to develop, hone and sharpen goal-setting and decision-making skills. This highly successful program included skill-building sessions and motivational speakers.

ACRP Project

This project team renovated and repaired a recreational facility for the Alternative Community Resource Program (ACRP), ACRP is a local non-profit, community-based agency which focuses on non-residential programs for children, adolescents and families. The team, along with the help of youth that would use and benefit from the center, cleaned, painted and made repairs to both the interior and exterior of the facility, purchased and assembled exercise and educational equipment and made additional repairs and additions to allow for outdoor activities.

Regional Business and Workforce Alignment Team

This team's goal was to provide a report that connects regional business and economic drivers to workforce utilization, show how regional business leaders are creating business opportunities, strengthening the local economy and hiring local talent, and showcase how the regional workforce is being used with a summary of current demographics and a highlight of future growth areas.

2009

Leftovers, PA

This team, using a model in place in Saint Charles, MO, designed a project is dedicated to supplying children and educators the basic tools and materials needed for creative learning by providing surplus resources donated by business, industry and the local communities committed to the development and advancement of education and the Arts. Their goal is to provide a self-sufficient facility that can run on its own, sustained wholly by community volunteers. This facility will be an educational and environmental resource for the community.

Junior Leadership Program

This team continued the project initiated by the Class of 2008, expanding it to work with Conemaugh Valley Junior/Senior High School along with Greater Johnstown High School to develop a leadership program for sophomores that would focus on by providing skills and decision-making resources to develop, hone and sharpen goal-setting and decision-making skills. This highly successful program included skill-building sessions and motivational speakers.

Taste of the Game

This project team's goal was to create and facilitate a free program where elementary school students are introduced to ice skating and hockey as a vehicle for fitness, recreation, socialization and team building. The secondary purpose was the introduce area youth to the Johnstown Chiefs, our local ECHL hockey team. This project served as a pilot for this program that the NHL hopes to expand to other cities.

Team Highland

This team recognized that Highland Regional Park's lack of concerted effort among all sports entities that use the facility created no self-sustaining usership and that increased marketing awareness is needed throughout the target area. Additionally, general park upgrades were needed to promote Highland Regional Park as an asset to the community. The team assisted with facility upgrades and worked with the Highland Regional Park Board to grow their connections to the community and with local businesses. They coordinated a grand re-opening to showcase both the renovations, which included a new scoreboard, field restoration, painting of the chain link fence, dugout renovations and additional field sponsorships to be displayed around the location of the scoreboards.