

***Holy Ghost Prep***

***Christian  
Service Program***

# Rationale

To be Christian means to give one's life to others in service as Jesus did. As a Catholic school, Holy Ghost Prep has an obligation, therefore, to teach students the value of Christian service as a way of responding to the call of the Gospel both now and throughout their lives. Such an obligation also emanates from the Spiritan identity and mission of the school. The founders of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, Claude DesPlaces and Francis Libermann, dedicated their lives and the Order they founded to serving the "poorest of the poor" and the "weak and most abandoned" of God's people. Educating students in the "Spiritans Tradition," as described in the school's mission statement, necessarily requires that students experience ways in which they can use their "unique gifts" in "generous service to the poor" in the spirit of DesPlaces and Libermann.

The Christian Service Program exists as part of the school's attempt to fulfill that obligation and to be faithful to that mission. It seeks to "form young men morally, intellectually, and spiritually" by engaging them in the injustices of the world, helping them to see the face of God in those they serve, and challenging them to discover and implement peaceful and just alternatives to our social ills. It further seeks to foster citizenship and to encourage students to question and breakdown racial and social stereotypes.

The program is required of all students for two reasons. First, the program emphasizes the integral relationship between apostolic service and the Christian life which defines Holy Ghost. Second, such a program will help students to discern their God-given talents and vocations as well as discover meaningful ways in which they can contribute to the community at this stage of their lives.

## Requirements of the Program

Freshmen and sophomores will independently complete ten (10) hours of service. Freshmen are *encouraged* to participate in projects directly benefiting POOR OR DISADVANTAGED children. Sophomores are *encouraged* to perform service benefiting the elderly. However, freshmen and sophomores are not limited to working with those groups. Freshmen and sophomores desiring to work with other groups should first consult the guidelines of "Acceptable Service" later in this brochure. Incoming freshmen can begin performing service for credit once they have completed eighth grade.

Occasionally, the Christian Service Program Coordinator will inform freshmen and sophomores of service opportunities with those groups through which the service requirement may be partially or completely fulfilled. Announcements for sign-ups for those opportunities will be made during lunch periods and posted on the Christian Service bulletin board.

Once a student has signed-up, he must be present as the success of the program depends on the participation of a certain number of students. If a student signs-up and then must withdraw, he must provide the coordinator with **advanced notice**. Verification of a student's presence at these programs will be provided by the faculty moderator/adult chaperone and given to the Christian Service Program Coordinator. Freshmen and sophomores who complete service hours through a non school-sponsored activity must obtain a service verification form from the Program Coordinator, have it filled out, and return it to the Program Coordinator.

Juniors and seniors will complete twenty (20) hours of service at a location off campus to be chosen by each student. The requirement may be fulfilled through a variety of service activities, although it is **preferred** that the student complete as much of the requirement as possible at one site. The Christian Service Program Coordinator will mail home in late spring a list of possible volunteer sites for all students, and more opportunities will be announced/posted as they become known throughout the school year.

The Christian Service Coordinator will not assign students to sites. It is the full and complete responsi-

bility at all times for all students to discern what service they want to perform, to make all contacts, to provide their own transportation to and from the site, and to provide all necessary documentation to the Christian Service Coordinator. If a student cannot be present for a service activity to which he has committed, it is his responsibility to notify the agency in advance. Volunteer agencies and Holy Ghost Prep will not tolerate unexcused absences. Those entering the junior or senior year are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to complete at least half of the required hours over the summer.

## **Acceptable Service**

All service performed by students must directly benefit people **in need** and must involve student **interaction with** those being assisted. **Examples of those in need are the: homeless, hungry, underprivileged, disabled, lonely, etc.** It is hoped that such interaction will foster not only a personal relationship between the student and the one he serves but also a learning relationship as the student becomes aware of both the nature and the cause of the other person's disadvantage.

All students should use the following guidelines to determine acceptable areas of service from which they can choose:

- 1) All off-campus service programs sponsored by Holy Ghost Prep which provide direct service to those in need are acceptable. Examples of these include the Harlem or Appalachia Trips, all Community Service Corps (CSC) Events and work with Habitat for Humanity. **In-school service as well as off-campus activities not providing direct service to and interaction with the disadvantaged cannot be used to fulfill this requirement.**
- 2) Any non-school sponsored service initiative, whether existing or student-designed, which provides direct service to and interaction with the disadvantaged is acceptable. Examples of this include: assisting those who participate in Special Olympics, providing companionship and assistance to residents of a Nursing Home, teaching others to read as a volunteer for a literacy program, serving meals to the homeless or homebound, etc. It is preferred that this service engage the students with a group with which they might not ordinarily interact.
- 3) Activities such as volunteering at a parish rectory, coaching a sports team, shoveling snow/cutting lawns, baby-sitting, or clearing a park of debris are **not** acceptable, **unless** students are coaching underprivileged children, visiting the shut-ins or elderly for whom they are shoveling snow or cutting lawns, interacting with the children who will play in the cleaned park, etc.... If that condition is not met, then the service performed will fall short of broadening students' horizons by failing to both expose students to social injustices and challenge students to venture outside of their normal "comfort zones."
- 4) Under no circumstances can students accept compensation or payment for any service completed for this requirement. Also, students are not permitted to credit travel time toward the required amount of hours. Adult supervisors and faculty moderators will also be instructed not to credit students for time present at an activity but during which they "goof off" or otherwise fail to participate.

Note that students of any grade level participating in a school-organized service project will be required to obtain a school parental permission form from the moderator of the project and to have it signed and then returned to the moderator prior to the project.

# Obtaining Approval

BEFORE BEGINNING ANY SERVICE, a student **should** obtain approval from the Coordinator of the Christian Service Program so as to ensure that the service meets the criteria for “acceptable service.” Without proper and prior approval, the student accepts the risk that any service completed may not satisfy part of or the entire requirement. **Any agencies listed in the accompanying stapled directory are already approved.**

Students are always encouraged to meet with the Coordinator of the program to discuss their service interests and possible volunteer sites. Students should also speak with the Coordinator regarding any difficulties they are experiencing with the program in general or with a specific site.

## Verification of Completed Service Hours

If students complete service hours in an activity sponsored by Holy Ghost Prep and chaperoned by a staff member, then the staff moderator of the service activity will provide verification. The student has no further responsibility to provide documentation. The student does have the responsibility to be present for the time required by the activity and to participate actively.

If students complete service hours through an activity or activities not sponsored/chaperoned by the school, they **MUST** obtain a verification form from the Program Coordinator, have it completed by their respective supervisors, and then return it to the Program Coordinator. **Verification forms can also be obtained from the “Service Projects Page” of the school’s website ([www.holyghostprep.org](http://www.holyghostprep.org)).**

These forms must be submitted shortly after all service hours have been completed. It is **not** the responsibility of the Coordinator to call agencies to confirm hours. Students are responsible for providing all necessary documentation on time and in proper format. When possible, a brochure about the agency with which students volunteered should accompany the verification form. If mailed, forms should be addressed to:

Christian Service Coordinator  
Holy Ghost Prep  
2429 Bristol Pike  
Bensalem, PA 19020

## Deadlines

Seniors must complete all hours and provide all necessary documentation by the first Monday of May; Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors, by the second Monday of May. Any hours completed or documentation submitted after that time must be approved by the Coordinator prior to the deadline. Seniors must comply in order to graduate on time. The parents/guardians of juniors, sophomores, and freshmen who do not complete their service requirements by the third Monday of May will be notified of such before the end of school. **Those students who are notified as being delinquent in this requirement will then have until the third Monday of June to complete their service (unless alternative arrangements are made in consultation with the Program Coordinator) or become ineligible to return to Holy Ghost Prep the following August.**

## **Additional Information**

### **To Be Noted**

- 1) A list of service opportunities will be mailed home and available from the Coordinator of the Program. New opportunities will be announced and posted regularly.
- 2) Opportunities for reflection on service performed will be provided for students throughout the school year. These may take such forms as a list of questions on which to base private reflection or an informal discussion group of students who have participated in similar projects.
- 3) A computerized database will be used to track students' hours. A list of students' hours will be posted regularly.
- 4) Parents will be notified of their son's progress through a notice included with report cards.
- 5) In order for any student to receive an extension beyond a deadline, he must provide a legitimate reason. Examples of such are: death in the family, illness, or an unresolvable conflict with another family commitment. Otherwise, students are expected to plan service around such things as: sporting events, intramurals, play practice, forensic tournaments, work, college visits, proms, concerts, school trips, regular doctor visits, retreats, Holidays, planned family vacations, etc.
- 6) A brief description of this program will be published in the student handbook. By signing the Statement of Understanding for the handbook, parents/guardians and students agree to fulfill the requirements of this program.
- 7) Parental involvement in this program is desired and encouraged. Parents/guardians who have suggestions for volunteer service or who would be willing to coordinate an activity should contact the Christian Service Program Coordinator at the school.

## **Words of Advice**

- 1) Begin service as soon as approval has been given. Agencies can only accommodate so many people. Don't be left out, especially during the Holiday Season when everyone wants to volunteer.
- 2) Accumulate hours steadily. It's difficult to complete them quickly in large chunks.
- 3) Unless you have a lot of free time to design and execute your own project, work with existing agencies.
- 4) Plan appropriately given your schoolwork, activities, and other commitments, such as the school's physical education requirement. Students should notify parents well in advance of when they plan to serve so that scheduling conflicts can be avoided and necessary transportation arrangements made.