

NEWS RELEASE

By Karen Patterson
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Columbus Foundation Awards Grant for Continuation and Expansion of “Growing Together” Service-Learning Network

Columbus, OH—The Columbus Foundation has awarded a \$20,000 grant to the non-profit organization Partnerships Make a Difference for the continuation and expansion of its “Growing Together” Service-Learning Network in the 2013-2014 school year. The award is made possible through the Richard C. and Nanciann Kaufman Ninde Fund.

The funds will be used primarily to create service-learning leadership experiences that bring together youth from diverse settings to collaborate on projects of common concern, including homelessness and hunger initiatives. Additionally, funds will support targeted professional development for Network teachers re: how they can utilize service-learning to help maximize character and leadership development opportunities for youth.

About Partnerships Make a Difference

Partnerships Make A Difference (Partnerships) was founded in 1996 by experienced and committed educators whose mission is to help young people develop a *sense of passion and purpose* for their own learning, and to enhance students’ belief that they can positively impact their own lives and the lives of others. Toward that end, our organization has successfully focused on helping schools and community organizations strengthen such program areas as service-learning, Project Based Learning, career development, substance abuse prevention, dropout prevention, and character education.

Currently, the major focus of Partnerships is to promote and expand the use of service-learning and Project Based Learning as strategies for instructional improvement, student empowerment, and positive community impact. This focus is evident in our work with the “Growing Together” Service-Learning Network.

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Learning with Purpose...Serving with Passion!

About The “Growing Together” Service-Learning Network

The “Growing Together” Service-Learning Network is a successful education initiative currently entering its third year of operation. The Network’s goals are to enhance student success and empowerment, increase the number of civically engaged youth, support significant school improvement/reform, and address critical local and global issues and needs. These goals are being accomplished through the expansion of school-based service-learning across a diverse and committed network of K-12 urban, rural, and suburban schools acting in partnership with key community agencies. Service-learning is an effective instructional strategy that directly connects community service with the school curriculum, adding relevance to the learning process and helping students actively engage in meaningful outreach efforts.

The *Growing Together* Service-Learning Network began taking shape in August 2009 and became operational for the 2011-2012 school year. There are currently more than 25 member K-12 schools, representing urban, suburban, and rural settings in central Ohio. In addition, the Network includes a growing number of key community agency partners.

In its first two years, the “Growing Together” Service-Learning Network has helped hundreds of teachers and thousands of students actively address critical needs related to poverty, homelessness, hunger, early childhood issues, literacy, physical and mental health, the environment, disaster relief, safety, individuals with disabilities, senior citizens, and other concerns.

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