

Learning with Purpose...Serving with Passion!

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For Immediate Release

By Kathy Meyer, Partnerships Make A Difference
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Educators and Community Agency Representatives Gather to Address Community Issues

Columbus, OH—More than 100 K-12 Educators and Community Agency Representatives will gather at **Mid-Ohio Foodbank** on Thursday, July 30, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., for the **annual "Growing Together" Service-Learning Network Kick-Off Workshop and Critical Issues Summit**. This important event brings together participants from "Growing Together" member K-12 schools and partner agencies/organizations to **explore complex community issues in central Ohio**. Based on our shared insights and commitment, we will again **identify specific service-learning ideas and actions to help address these challenges more effectively in the coming year**.

This event will be facilitated by Partnerships Make a Difference, and is sponsored by Piada Italian Street Food, American Electric Power Foundation, Siemer Family Foundation, Harry C. Moores Foundation, Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, Mid-Ohio Foodbank, and The Columbus Foundation.

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.

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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.

About The "Growing Together" Service-Learning Network

The "Growing Together" Service-Learning Network is a successful education initiative currently entering its 4th 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 and Project Based 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 a form of Project Based Learning and is an effective instructional strategy that directly connects community service with the school curriculum, adding relevance and authenticity to the learning process while 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 40 member K-12 schools, representing urban, suburban, and rural settings in central Ohio (including Columbus City Schools). In addition, the Network includes a growing number of key community agency partners.

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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