eXcel Youth Zone
CREATING CHANGE ↔ LEADERS NOW
P.O.Box 880474• San Diego, CA 92168 • Phone: (619) 599-8205

GREEN FOOTPRINTS PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

Excel Youth Zone's Green Footprints Program supports environmental service-learning projects for K-12th grade youth. Growing knowledge on environmental footprints – the ways humans rely on natural resources – was the inspiration behind the creation of a Green Footprints Program within Excel Youth Zone. Instead of depletion of natural resources, youth engage in the community to regenerate and conserve environmental assets which will lead to a "greening" impact in nature.

PAST PROJECTS

Excel Youth Zone (XYZ) is contributing to a new generation of environmentally aware and action oriented youth. The Green Footprints program is central for youth K-12th grade to research and develop innovative projects and collaborative efforts to address the issues which impact the youth where they live and beyond.

Environmental projects are a favorite of all Excel Youth Zone youth participants. Projects in the past include: the hosting of a Clean Air Fair, the removal of invasive plant species, restoring natural habitats with Aquatic Adventures, educating the community on the impact of storm drain pollution and Reuse, Reduce, Recycle Campaigns just to name a few. Our middle school youth are currently discussing their desires to focus on service projects around our waterways and oceans.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK: SERVICE-LEARNING

The highlight of our environmental service-learning projects launched in June 2008 when Excel Youth Zone facilitated 36 high school youth to Yosemite National Park for 4 days to learn and work side-by-side with environmental experts and National Park Rangers in field science research. Our youth in Yosemite participate in taking measurements of designated trees to monitor their growth rate and compare data to information collected in the 1930s. Youths' measurements help create long-term management plans for the giant sequoia forest. Post-survey results of youth from the Yosemite trip found: 100% stated they now understood the relevance of their science classes to real-life, 100% could identify a new science/ environmental career or profession and 100% have returned to San Diego County to recruit other youth to work on a locally related environmental service-learning projects.

CURRENT PROJECTS

In 2010, Excel Youth Zone partnered with Earth Force, a national nonprofit agency that provides students with opportunities to become active leaders in their communities. Earth Force helps individual students learn how they can make a difference in their community by choosing an environmental issue they care deeply about and coming up with a long-term solution to implement. Earth Force's 6 Step Curriculum provides a structure for students to discover environmental needs, identify important community issues, and implement service-learning projects.

Through this partnership, Excel Youth Zone hosts the Urban Environmental Challenge (UEC), which is a Call to Action set forth by Earth Force and the Staples Foundation for students in San Diego and nine other cities around the country to complete service-learning projects that impact the environment addressing issues of Climate Change and Environmental Stewardship. Student groups, 5th – 9th grade, can enter the challenge to compete for a $1,000 customizable technology award from Staples to continue their education on important environmental issues in their communities. More information on the UEC can be found at www.earthforce.org. Registration ends March 15, 2011.

In 2011, Excel Youth Zone has also partnered with Surf Aid, a non-profit humanitarian organization whose aim is to improve the health, wellbeing and self-reliance of people living in isolated communities connected to us through surfing. The SurfAid Schools Program provides students with the opportunity to examine important global issues through various content areas in standards based lessons that raise their social awareness and encourage them to become global citizens.

CONCLUSION

Excel Youth Zone's environmental service-learning projects promote youth development, teamwork, leadership, stewardship and a love for learning and science. A grant from the Cox Kids Foundation helped launch the Green Footprints Program in 2009. Excel Youth Zone is excited about other opportunities to financial and programmatically sustain and expand this program for youth to be able to impact their local communities and national environment for a lifetime.

For More Information Contact: bbanville@excelyouthzone.org or call (619) 599-8205 xt 3

“The New Home of Youth Service California”

eXcel Youth Zone (XYZ), is a California statewide non-profit established in 2003 to engage youth and educators in community service-learning projects in classrooms and after-school clubs. Youth-led teams work to design, explore, and experience service projects that meet community needs, develop leadership and civic skills, build character, enhance academic skills, and advance youth development. XYZ provides a full spectrum of service-learning expertise and technical assistance to support K-12 youth, schools and their partners in higher education. Excel Youth Zone’s services exist throughout all of California with programming in Colorado and Nevada.

eXcel YOUTH
XYZ service-learning experts empower youth through meaningful service, leadership tasks, educational enrichment and opportunities to connect with guest speakers including community leaders from local and regional networks. The average youth in eXcel Youth Zone programs contributes 40 hours of service each year. In 2010 XYZ estimates that youth in our programs contributed close to $1.4 million to San Diego County. (Based on Independent Sector’s estimated dollar value of volunteer time at $19.51 per hour.)

eXcel EDUCATORS
Excel Youth Zone host the Statewide Service - Learning Regional Network for the California Department of Education’s (CDE) – CalSERVE Initiative. XYZ’s is tasked to provide support, training and technical assistance to the state’s Regional Leads, certified trainers specialized in service-learning strategies, educational administrators and youth educators of all types. XYZ helps these facilitators to create and implement service-learning projects through training, coaching, networking, and resources. Each year XYZ hosts the California Service Learning Institute – a conference for all to develop skills, build curriculum and network.

eXcel PROGRAMS
XYZ’s mission to provide meaningful service experiences for both educators and youth has established us to host and promote a cadre of high quality service-learning curriculum. XYZ’s programming has not only made this organization unique but garners national attention as a model of service-learning youth engagement.

<u>Programs include</u>:

- SERVAPALOOZA
- Green Footprints
  - Earth Force
  - Yosemite National Institute
  - SurfAID
- Youth Leadership
  - Catalyst Ambassadors
  - Club eXcel
  - Club XYZ
- PeaceJam International
- Girlz Excel **(*NEW!)**
- Live the Legacy **(*NEW or EXPANDING!)**
  - MLK Day of Service
  - Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties
  - Cesar Chavez Day – Ten Core Values
  - Fredrick Douglass – Anti-Human Trafficking and Abolition of Slavery
  - California Service-Learning Regional Network

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Club XYZ - Club eXcel - CATALYST

Out-of-School Time

Youth Service-Learning and Leadership Clubs

Youth Leadership

In Excel Youth Zone's youth leadership clubs, members work in teams to organize service activities, demonstrate leadership skills and gain educational enrichment in the community. Youth have two leadership club options: Club XYZ and Club eXcel.

Club XYZ – Club XYZ are leadership clubs for youth K-12 that are located on-site at their elementary, middle and high schools, and other youth community-based organizations. These youth are trained by XYZ staff in leadership curriculum and utilize team communication, group problem solving and project planning skills to implement various service-learning projects at their site and in their larger community.

Club eXcel – High School students from across their area apply and are selected by their peers in the club to serve in Club eXcel. Together members of Club eXcel plan and implement three service-learning projects for thousands of people each year to serve under the club members' leadership. The club is unique in the youth themselves facilitate the club with support from highly trained and skilled adult advisors and mentor volunteers.

CATALYST – Short for California Taking Action for Learning through Youth Service Teams, the CATALYST Program is a California state-wide coalition of 22 youth Ambassadors. In addition to developing and managing high quality service-learning projects, the Ambassadors are also community advocates. As youth leaders, the Ambassadors outreach to various non-profits and community organizations to further the cause of service-learning. During their 2-3 year term, CATALYST Ambassadors will have not only positively impacted their local neighborhoods, but service-learning efforts all across California.

Curriculum

XYZ facilitates these youth leadership clubs for elementary through high school utilizing the latest leadership and service-learning curriculum including and not limited to:

- **Y.E.L.L.** - research-based curriculum for youth leadership and development out of the John Gardner Center at Stanford University. Y.E.L.L. (Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning) Curriculum is designed for school, program, and community leaders to support authentic youth participation, promote effective policies and practices to strengthen communities, and support young people's personal growth.

- **PYLI** – Points of Light Youth Leadership Institute (PYLI) is designed specifically for teens out of the Center for Creative Leadership to empower teens to work in a team environment to plan and implement a service project while applying 21st century skills such as team building, effective communication, goal setting and project planning.

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