



LEADING by SERVING

*National Farmers Union
Youth Education Curriculum*





Greetings!

Through guidance from its national board of directors and state education directors, National Farmers Union has chosen “Leading by Serving” as its 2010 youth education curriculum theme.

National Farmers Union believes that true leadership results from a fundamental desire to help others. From its inception in 1902, Farmers Union has had a strong history of service to rural America. Through legislative advocacy, support for cooperative ventures and educational opportunities, Farmers Union simultaneously serves and leads on the global agricultural stage.

The future of the world depends heavily upon the service of this generation and the next. National Farmers Union believes everyone has gifts of service to offer, regardless of age, skills or income. Therefore, it encourages youth involvement through training and opportunities for young people as early as first grade.

Through the following lesson plans, students will explore the positive attributes of volunteerism and service. They will also learn how Farmers Union, its farmer-members and member-owned cooperatives practice servant leadership on the local, state, national and global scenes.

On the following pages you will find background information on these topics and lesson plans for grades 1-12. These lesson plans may be used in a series or as stand-alone activities to supplement your teachings.

Thank you for the time and energy you devote to educating young people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Johnson".

Roger Johnson, President
National Farmers Union

“Leading by Serving”

Youth Leader Overview

At first, it may sound like a paradox. How can one be a leader and a servant simultaneously?

Although the concept of servant leadership was described in ancient texts such as the Bible and the Tao Te Ching, in modern times the term “servant-leader” was coined and defined by Robert Greenleaf. In an essay that he published in 1970, he wrote: “The servant-leader *is* servant first....It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve; to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions....The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types....The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served.”

Building a New Foundation

“America’s new foundation will be built one community at a time – and it starts with you.” This is a quote taken from Serve.gov, the Web portal for the Obama Administration’s “United We Serve” initiative. The President is calling on all Americans to help meet the nation’s growing social needs resulting from the economic downturn by serving in our communities.

It may seem that one individual’s actions, especially those of a child, may be insignificant in comparison to some of the large issues such as hunger, environmental degradation and poverty. However, action on an individual level is the only way big changes are made. Without individual volunteerism, there’s no community action. Without community action, there cannot be global sustainability. Global change is absolutely impossible without individual servant leadership.

As inspirational author Marianne Williamson has said, “In every community, there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it.”

Farmers Union’s Role

Farmers Union’s mission is to protect and enhance the economic well-being and quality of life for family farmers, ranchers, fishers and their rural communities.

Volunteerism, servant leadership and community development are all integral to maintaining healthy rural communities. Concern for community is a central value of National Farmers Union and the cooperatives that it supports.

In its policy manual, National Farmers Union devotes numerous passages to youth leadership, both within and outside the organization. Through the “Leading by Serving” curriculum activities, Farmers Union’s goal is to introduce young people to the important concepts of volunteerism, philanthropy and servant leadership and to challenge each child to exhibit these ideals in the present and in the future.



“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then you are a leader.”

- John Quincy Adams

Tips for Using NFU's Lesson Plans

1. Do your homework. Make sure you have read through the entire lesson plan before attempting to share the information with children.
2. If working with several age groups, try to present background information and any joint activities to the junior groups as a whole and to the senior groups as a whole. Break up the age levels into groups for age-specific activities led simultaneously by additional volunteers. Bring the age groups back together when possible to reinforce the lesson. Younger children can “show and tell” to older students and older students can lead younger children in another activity related to the lesson.
3. Mix it up. Studies have shown that high school and middle school students need a change of activity every 15 minutes in order to remain interested and focused. This time frame drops lower for younger children.
4. Use your imagination. The following pages are a starting point for teaching children about volunteerism. Your creativity is encouraged as you expand on these lesson plans in your area.

Additional Resources

National Farmers Union (www.nfu.org) and your own state Farmers Union has more information about how Farmers Union serves its members, strengthens family farming and enhances rural communities.

Corporation for National & Community Service (<http://nationalserviceresources.org>) offers tools and training for volunteer and service programs.

Idealist Kids & Teens (www.idealist.org) is designed to introduce young people to the world of nonprofit organizations. Resources are available on youth volunteerism.

Learning to Give (www.learningtogive.org), the curriculum division of The LEAGUE, is the world's leading developer of lessons and resources that teach giving and volunteerism, civic engagement and character through service-learning.

The Clinton Foundation's Stories of Giving (<http://giving.clintonfoundation.org/stories>) shares the stories of individuals and organizations who are using the gift of service to make a positive impact in the world.

The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (www.greenleaf.org) is an international non-profit organization that promotes the understanding and practice of servant leadership.



How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

-- Anne Frank

The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.

-- Nelson Henderson

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

-- Winston Churchill

What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal. -- Albert Pike