

SLN Service Learning Network *Telling Your Story* **Guidelines**

About Us:

The Service Learning Network helps to promote service-learning projects around the Greater Cincinnati area by generating professional quality photographs, video, interviews and news articles. The content can be used on school websites and social media platforms and the network has a strong track record of successfully placing the stories with local media - television, print and online.

Steve Oldfield, Assistant Director of Service Learning, has worked for more than two decades as a television reporter, producer and documentary filmmaker. His articles and photography have been featured in national publications. Steve also offers free workshops for teachers, staff and students about how to take better photographs and video, along with creating compelling content that celebrates service-learning projects.

Sharing your students' service with a newspaper, internet or television story can help to celebrate their work, along with raising school and community awareness of service-learning projects. The Service Learning Network can help you during every step of the process – from planning to capturing service with photography and/or video to writing and pitching the story to news organizations.

Before your contact us:

Please discuss this opportunity with your building principal and get their approval. We welcome the opportunity to meet with your building principal or central office personnel to share the program and mission of the Service Learning Network.

Our goal is to highlight the great work of your students. It is essential for us to have editing power and a quick turn around on the story. We often times pitch the story to the news channel before we cover it to ensure they have time to run it. Because of this we are not able to send the story for approval; however, if you, your students or central office personnel would like to contribute content to the script prior to filming, we welcome the opportunity.

We are aware and sensitive that there may be students that are unable to be photographed and will work with teachers and staff to remove them from the shot without calling negative attention to the student.

Scheduling – Request for Coverage:

When you have figured out which day(s) will be most visual, please contact Beth Niemann bniemann@childreninc.org or submit your request through <http://bit.ly/SLNrequest>. Please allow at least 10 days or more before the event; however we may be able to fit in last minute requests.

Planning:

Think about which parts of your project will be the most visual for photography and video. If this is an all-day project, please try to narrow down the most impactful hour or two for shooting. For instance, if your students are going to be passing out painted pumpkins that call attention to food allergies, the most visual day is when the students are actually painting the pumpkins – not when they're handing them out after school.

Before the shoot, iron out the details:

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- Where is the best place to shoot? Is the room well-lit? Is there background noise?
- Have you cleared this with your principal and/or other supervisor?
- Do you need to have someone watch your class while the shoot is taking place?
- Gather pertinent statistics in advance to give to the Service Learning Network. (For example, how many pumpkins will be painted? How many plastic bags or canned goods were collected? Estimates are fine. How many students/classes are participating and which grades?)

Please check to make sure all of your students have signed permission slips on file to cover photography and video and if any students are on the "do not photograph" policy, please arrange for them to not be in the middle of the action during the shoot.

If you believe that short interviews with students would be helpful to tell the story, please select two students: **1 boy and 1 girl**. (If absolutely necessary, we can also interview a 3rd student but two are preferred). If a teacher, parent, volunteer or community partner should also be interviewed, please ask them before the day of the shoot.

Interview Preparation:

Few things are as frustrating as seeing students trying to repeat something they have memorized. Try to avoid over-coaching them on answers or telling them what to say. Giving students a few key phrases or talking points is great – giving them a scripted sentence or paragraph is always a bad idea. Typically, the questions cover the following topics:

- A 1-2 sentence description of the project.
- Describe what the students did or are doing.
 - "We picked the pumpkins then we painted them teal, that's the color for food allergies. Then, we passed them out to families at school."
- What is something you've learned with this project? Tell us about the group you're helping?
- What did you like about this project? Would you like to do it again and why?

Day of the Shoot:

- Make sure you have left word with the office staff and your fellow teachers that a cameraperson is coming to get video and/or photographs.
- Talk with ALL of the students in the class about NOT looking at the camera if they are being videotaped. Please explain that they need to ignore the camera and to act naturally. Students who "act up" or look into the camera will be edited out of the video and photographs – unless they are specifically asked to pose for a photograph.
- If your students are particularly nervous, it's okay to role-play and to practice a fake interview before the shoot.
- Please explain to any teacher or parent with a camera to try to avoid using a flash at all costs. Flashes can ruin video shots and also must never be done during the interviews.

After the Shoot:

Please explain to students that not everyone will end up in the video or photographs. It's also a good idea to say that while the school will definitely be getting copies of the photos and/or video, we never know if a news organization is going to run the story. Better to be pleasantly surprised than to have a room full of disappointed students (and parents).