
Change the World Kids

Background

According to historian Alexis de Tocqueville, “In no country in the world has the principle of association been more successfully used or applied to a greater multitude of objects than in America.” He viewed volunteerism as one of the most important parts of a democratic society.

All across Vermont, volunteers work together to make a big difference in local, national, and international affairs. In 1997, Vermonter Jody Williams and the organization she worked for, the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, won the Nobel Prize for Peace. Numerous other organizations in Vermont help to protect the environment, feed the hungry, and provide vital services such as transportation and medical care to individuals and communities. Each year in spring, volunteers across the state clean up litter in their communities on Green Up Day.

Founded in Woodstock, Vermont, Change the World Kids is “an energetic group of middle and high-school aged youth undertaking humanitarian and environmental efforts to make a positive differences in our local communities and across the globe.” Now expanded to a number of branches in other communities, Change the World Kids has done everything from stacking wood and dog walking for elders to raising funds to buy and preserve rain forest land in Costa Rica.



Woodstock, Vermont high school students researching endangered bird species in a remote Costa Rican rain forest in April, 2006 during their “Bosque para Siempre” (“Forever Forest”) project.

photo: Change the World Kids

About This Segment

Change the World Kids, produced by Woodstock, Vermont, filmmaker Anne Macksoud, follows a group of Change the World Kids volunteers as they work to make their community and the world at large a better place. As we watch the kids engage in a number of activities, they talk about the reasons they made a commitment to change, and how they are working to make change happen.

Before Viewing

- What role do volunteers play in your school or community?
- What organizations do these volunteers represent?
- What makes the work of community volunteers so important?
- What does a volunteer organization need to get its job done?

Vocabulary

volunteer: a person who works for free, usually to perform an act of public service

After Viewing

- What services do Change the World Kids provide in their community?
- What services do they provide in other places?
- Why do the young people involved in Change the World Kids do what they do?

Grades 4-5

Promo Poster Like all volunteer organizations, Change the World Kids needs to produce publicity materials that help it gather new volunteers and donations of money and supplies. Find out more about Change the World Kids. Then create a poster or flier that promotes Change the World Kids or one of its projects. Use the piece you've created to publicize the great work Change the World Kids is doing in Vermont and around the world.

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Design research (3-4:3; 5-6:3); Conduct research (3-4:4; 5-6:4); Make connections to research (3-4:6; 5-6:6); Communicate findings (3-4:7; 5-6:7); Understand how cultures change (3-4:13; 5-6:13); Act as citizens (3-4:14; 5-6:14)

Help Out Your School No matter how much gets done every day at your school, more volunteer help is always needed. Work with your teacher and classmates to find a need in your school that could be met through the work of student volunteers. Maybe it's painting a classroom or reading to younger students. Maybe it means planting some flowers to make your school grounds look better, or creating a composting system. Work out ways volunteers could make the time needed to give to a project.

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (3-4:1; 5-6:1); Act as citizens (3-4:14; 5-6:14); Understand how cultures change (3-4:13; 5-6:13); Act as citizens (3-4:14; 5-6:14)

Grades 6-8

Green Up Day In 2010, Vermont celebrated the 40th anniversary of Green Up Day, the state's annual "spring cleaning." Every year on Green Up Day, volunteers work together to pick up trash and beautify Vermont's roadsides. This year, make it official: organize a Green Up Day Group in your school. Get help from a teacher or other adult to arrange transportation to and from the work site. Work to get as many students as possible to join in. Check in with your town's department of public works to arrange for pickup



Woodstock high school students hiking Cloudforest and Rain Shadow Forest habitat in Costa Rica with biologists during their June 2007 Bosque para Siempre project.

photo: Change the World Kids

of trash. And be sure to obey all safety rules when working along roadsides. Document your Green Up Day and share it online. To find out more about Green Up Day, visit greenupvermont.org.

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1); Understand how cultures change (5-6:13; 7-8:13); Act as citizens (5-6:14; 7-8:14)

A Tribute to Volunteers People who volunteer in your school or community give hundreds, even thousands of hours of their time every year. So why not show your gratitude for their hard work? Organize a night of tribute to community volunteers. Invite everyone in your community to come and thank those volunteers for their hard work. You can write letters of appreciation, or make certificates to present to your valuable volunteers.

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1); Understand how cultures change (5-6:13; 7-8:13); Act as citizens (5-6:14; 7-8:14)

Spotlight on Community Create a video profile an organization doing volunteer work in your community. To start, identify a few volunteer organizations and learn more about them. After you've chosen which one to focus on, contact a representative of the group to set up some on-camera interviews and shoot group members at work. Edit your shoots into a 3-5 minute profile. You can broadcast the profile on line or even at your local cable access TV station.

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1) Conduct research (5-6:4; 7-8:4) Develop reasonable supporting explanations (5-6:5; 7-8:5); Understand how cultures change (5-6:13; 7-8:13); Act as citizens (5-6:14; 7-8:14)

Thinking Local One great way to discover volunteer opportunities in your community is to visit a local nonprofit and find out how the group does its work. Look in your local phone directory, or contact your local government to get a listing of community organizations such as food banks, historical societies, humane societies, or environmental organizations. Choose one you are interested in and make an appointment for a small group visit. When you make your visit, find out more about what the organization does and what its needs are. Later, send the group a letter offering some help.

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1) Conduct research (5-6:4; 7-8:4) Develop reasonable supporting explanations (5-6:5; 7-8:5); Understand how cultures change (5-6:13; 7-8:13); Act as citizens (5-6:14; 7-8:14)

Grades 9-12

Start Your Own Chapter Do you think that Change the World Kids is a great organization? Would you like to start a Change the World Kids group of your own? Contact Change the World Kids and learn what it takes to set up a chapter in your community. Remember that you'll probably need the support of at least a few adults to start such a group. And you may want to start small, with just a few members and a small project. Who knows where you can go from there?

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (9-10:1; 11-12:1); Design research (9-10:3; 11-12:3); Conduct research (9-10:4; 11-12:4); Make connections to research (9-10:6; 11-12:6); Understand how cultures change (9-10:13; 11-12:13); Act as citizens (9-10:14; 11-12:14)

The Role of Government Some people think the government should assume a bigger role, and spend more money to meet social needs. Others think the role of government in social services is too large, and should

be reduced. Hold a debate on this issue, with one group taking either side. To prepare for the debate, each group should gather evidence to support its position, including statistics about social needs and government expenditures. Choose a member of the team to serve as debater, and help that person prepare. When you are ready, hold the debate, with members of another class acting as judges.

Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (9-10:1; 11-12:1); Design research (9-10:3; 11-12:3); Conduct research (9-10:4; 11-12:4); Communicate findings (9-10:7; 11-12:7); Make connections to research (9-10:6; 11-12:6); Understand how cultures change (9-10:13; 11-12:13); Act as citizens (9-10:14; 11-12:14)

Career Corner: Community Organizer

What does it take to run a community group? You'll need a variety of skills. Writing and speaking are very important. Those skills help you communicate with volunteers, supports, and other community members. Math skills help, too. You'll need them to figure out program costs, plan fundraising events, and pay your bills on time.

What's the most important skill for a community organizer? The ability to work well with a variety of people. If you're a people person, this might be the job for you. The best way to start in community group work is to put in some volunteer hours. You'll build important on-the-job skills. You'll also get an idea of which kind of group might be right for you. Before getting involved in politics, President Barack Obama was a community organizer. Who knows how this career might influence you!

RESOURCES

Links

Change the World Kids: changetheworldkids.org

Green Up Vermont: greenupvermont.org