



Society Strategies

Federation of Genealogical Societies

P.O. Box 200940 Austin TX 78720-0940

Series Set I Number 5

Rev. September 2001

Set I Strategies for Societies Community Service Projects

by Sandra Hargreaves Luebking

Supplemental Page

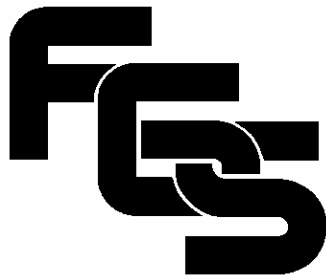
This strategy paper, written some years ago, is an FGS *Classic* that contains ideas and strategies still relevant today in society management.

This paper discusses some ideas for community service projects, which serve to unify a society as its members achieve goals and share a sense of reward and pride while their activities enrich the community.

The information on page 4 which directs the interested person on how to obtain copies of this paper is incorrect. The FGS office no longer reprints the SSS papers, and has phased out paper copies of the SSS papers altogether.

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Set I Strategies for Societies Community Service Projects by Sandra Hargreaves Luebking

INTRODUCTION

Organizations spend significant time selecting a project. Consideration is given to cost, availability of volunteers, benefits to the society, and value to the genealogical and historical community. In addition, attention is given to how a project can serve the non-genealogical community as well. Projects of this nature win friends and supporters for the organization and for genealogy.

The following are typical projects which serve the organization, its members, and the larger community to which the organization belongs.

FUNDING SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

The Elgin Genealogical Society, Post Office Box 1418, Elgin, Illinois 60121-1418, <<http://nsn.nsilus.org/elghome/egs>>, awarded a scholarship/grant for \$1,000 to Garfield Farm Museum, an 1840's living history museum in LaFox, Illinois. This grant was intended to fund the work of a three month summer intern to catalog and index the museum's collection of over 2,000 19th century documents.

Samford University's Institute for Genealogical and Historic Research in Birmingham, Alabama attracts family historians from throughout the United States. The weeklong program trains researchers at all levels, from beginners to aspiring professionals. Each year, a scholarship is given to the Birmingham Public Library. A librarian, chosen by BPL, may attend the beginners' course of instruction. Scholarships to librarians is a public service idea for any organization which conducts classes, seminars, or workshops.

PROMOTING AND PRESERVING COMMUNITY HISTORY

Identifying and preserving abandoned cemeteries can be a full-time quest for county genealogical and historical societies. Genealogist Mary Powell Hammersmith learned this when she decided to save a historic DuPage County, Illinois burial ground from developers who sought the site for an office building. Using local and family history research skills, Mrs. Hammersmith documented the historic importance of the burial ground, proving that General John B. Beaubien, second permanent settler of

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Chicago, was buried there. Eventually, county government officials and the developer agreed to preserve the cemetery, which includes thirteen burials. A large monument, "The Beaubien Burial Ground 1844," was dedicated. The cemetery owes its preservation to the efforts of one genealogist who refused to give up. Consider what an entire corps of volunteers could do.

Cemeteries at risk from vandalism can be protected by organizations concerned with preserving community history. Writing in *The Forum Insider*, the newsletter of the Genealogical Forum of Oregon, Inc., Jeanne Gentry suggests forming a Cemetery Vigilance Campaign to protect these resting places on the night they are the most vulnerable to innocent pranks or malicious destructiveness; Halloween.

Gentry says that finding a sponsor to host a Cemetery Halloween Party is one solution. Sponsors can be a cemetery association, the city council, local Chamber of Commerce, neighboring church, PTA, Boy Scout troop, high schools, local businesses, or clubs. A party gives pranksters, usually children, a more constructive outlet for their energies.

While the party is going on, teams of adults are sent off and welcomed back with great fanfare, as they conduct one-hour shifts of cemetery patrols. Not only does the protection pay a dividend, the publicity generated by the party creates community awareness of the importance of preserving historical sites.

CREATING FINDING AIDS

There are a multitude of indexing projects which can benefit the local area users of archives and libraries. The Jefferson County Historical Society, P.O. Box 146, Oskaloosa, KS 66066, has cataloged a collection of artifacts and photographs found in the Museum (Research Library) at Old Jefferson Town. Volunteers are given on the job

training, a fun evening, and the satisfaction of having performed a real service to their historical society and community.

Some time ago, the Lafayette County Genealogical Workshop and Lafayette County Clerk, Steve Pickett, joined hands in a service project to save the county's marriage records. Society volunteers logged more than 700 hours (and 2,594 miles driving to and from the courthouse) to input marriage records, 1847-1990, into the county's computer.

Clerk Pickett designed the program and the resulting index will be maintained and updated by the Register of Deeds office. LCGS will receive one copy of the completed work, from which it may reprint copies to sell. Project director was Fran Matl (who contributed 456 volunteer hours). [Lafayette County Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 443, Shullsburg, WI 53586-0443]

PROVIDING LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The History Committee of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Mill Stream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499 <http://lanclio.org/highlights/lmhs.htm>, sponsors a junior high level "Venture Into Your Past" experience. Participants spend the morning at Society headquarters to get acquainted, share items from Grandma's attic, explore the Society's historical resources, and take an audio-visual "Old World Ramble."

The day concludes with a bus trip along the old Conestoga Road through Lancaster County's first settlement to visit 18th century houses and farms in the Willow Street Lampeter community. Stops include the 1719 Herr House, a limekiln and grist mill, and one of the county's oldest cemeteries where the young historians learn to do tombstone rubbing.



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Of course, there is one other important stop; a roadside picnic lunch. Details are available from the Society headquarters.

SHARING RESOURCES

The concept of shared resources has many applications. Shared space, copy machines, volunteer hours, sponsorship of community functions, even post office boxes and secretarial staff are all possibilities. Shared resources can benefit the community by enabling area groups (not just genealogical or historical) to purchase more expensive or sophisticated equipment, as well as to consider more ambitious projects than any single group could manage alone.

When the West Valley Computer Genealogy Group and the Sun Cities Genealogical Society separately identified needs for a computer, they decided to join forces in both the purchase and the use of hardware and accessories. This made good sense: WVCGG wanted to track membership and have demonstration capabilities for computer classes while SCGS needed a computer primarily for library use.

A schedule was worked out whereby WVCGG used the computer when the society library was closed. Storage at the library was convenient for both groups. Both groups sought funds for this purchase from their individual membership and outside sources. The WVCGG contributions were donated to the SCGS, and title to the equipment resides there. [Sun Cities Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 1448, Sun City, AZ 85372-1448.]

HELPING HANDS

Does your society have an emergency-reaction plan in place? When the great flood hit Chicago in April 1992, threatening the records so critical to research, Chicago Genealogical Society's president, Diane McClure telephoned the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

McClure offered the assistance of volunteers to replace or repair records moved or damaged as a result of the rising waters. The Clerk was most appreciative of the proposed assistance, especially coming at a time of disaster.

Every organization needs a plan to respond to emergencies and a team of volunteers to offer Helping Hands at a moment's notice. Make this emergency-reaction system known to county and local officials and remind them of it often. Helping Hands could spell the difference between record destruction and preservation.

HONORING ACHIEVERS

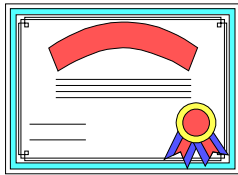
The Heritage Hall of Fame recognizes individuals who have contributed to the preservation of Elgin area history or heritage. The contributions may include books written about the Elgin area and its people, genealogical records, preservation of artifacts, and assembling of historical or genealogical collections.

The Heritage Hall of Fame was begun in 1986 and eleven individuals have been honored during that time. A special exhibit of plaques and the presentation speeches given at the time of induction are now on display at Old Main Museum, 360 Park Street, Elgin, Illinois. For more information, contact the Elgin Genealogical Society, P. O. Box 1418, Elgin, IL 60121-1418; Web site <http://nsn.nslsilus.org/elghome/egs/index.html>.

Recognition also goes to public officials who contribute valuable aid to researchers. This honor is one way in which the Missouri State Genealogical Association promotes good public relations and acknowledges remarkable service. Two early recipients of MOSGA's Certificates of Appreciation were Charlene Ward, Deputy Recorder, Caldwell County, Missouri and Patsy Olvera, Recorder of Deeds for Lafayette County, Missouri.

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Ms. Ward was recognized for her courtesy, personal interest in people's requests, and willingness to locate records, even in a pigeon-infested room in the courthouse attic. Mrs. Olvera and her staff were cited for having created special finding aids, preserving and making readily available older documents, and maintaining an uncluttered working space for the use of researchers. [Missouri State Genealogical Association, P. O. Box 833, Columbia, MO 65205-0833.]



The Federation of Genealogical Societies provides national recognition to individuals or organizations for service to FGS or an FGS member organization. An individual who makes outstanding contributions in a single year is honored by the George E. Williams Award while the Distinguished Service Award honors individuals or member organizations. Meritorious service in genealogy and family history qualifies an individual or organization for nomination for the Award of Merit while the FGS Director's Award recognizes distinguished public service in support of

genealogy by an individual or an organization—an organization generally not an FGS member organization.

A full list and explanation of awards is available at the FGS Website <www.fgs.org>. Applications from this site may be used to simplify the nomination process.

Nominations are requested throughout the year. Awards are presented at the annual conference or meeting of the Federation. Do consider submitting the names of persons or organizations whose community service projects or contributions deserve national recognition.

SUMMARY

Community service projects begin with identifying a need and end with meeting that need. Once a need is defined, consider projects or contributions in the areas of scholarships, promotion and preservation, education, assistance, and recognition. Use your imagination to match organization projects with community service. By adopting this philosophy, your organization—and community—will reap great benefits.

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