

## 3.8 COMMUNITY SERVICE

### 3.8.1 The Job

The tradition of linking a service project to a major reunion emerged in honor of the University's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The University alumni community was challenged to come up with new one-time and ongoing community service projects (the 250x250 Community Service Challenge). Many classes started or expanded projects at their major reunions. The tradition is fitting of Princeton's unofficial motto, *In the Nation's Service and In the Service of All Nations*. The practice has had an extremely positive side-effect for major reunions. Some classmates who would otherwise not return will do so to contribute to a meaningful project. Also, the kind of camaraderie that is created working together in the service of others, even for a few hours, adds a unique dimension to Reunions.

The job of the Community Service Chair is to help select and champion the reunion service project. In some cases this will be a continuation of an ongoing class project, or something that helps with one dimension of that project. In others, it will be linking up with existing University groups to help in some way. The basic job is to:

- Identify and coordinate the reunion service project for the class.
- Consider linking the project idea to the reunion theme.
- Work with class and/or University service groups.
- Organize, publicize and facilitate the project.

### 3.8.2 Timetable

We strongly recommend you use the detailed Reunion Planning Checklist with all relevant deadlines, available on the Office of the Alumni Association Reunions Volunteers web page. Planning for a major reunion service project one or two years in advance can help build momentum for the project.

### 3.8.3 Related Information

**Past project ideas.** Projects have ranged from simple, one time events (such as contributing to University book drives) to the long-range and complex (such as sponsoring and helping to build a house for Habitat for Humanity). Ideas have included:

- Book drives (these can be connected with other projects, such as helping an impoverished school start a library)
- Collecting and donating gently used sports equipment and eyeglasses
- Clothing drives
- Sponsoring and building a Habitat for Humanity house
- Working on local brownstone renovations and building area playgrounds
- Reading to children in the Hank Panell (Clay Street) Learning Center

**Link the theme to the project or vice versa.** This may be appropriate depending on the scope and size of the project. '77's "Gimme Shelter" sponsored a Habitat for Humanity house, '79's "Return to Classics" had a book drive project entitled, "Return with a Classic."

**University service groups.** The Alumni Council Committee on Community Service can provide information on projects and contacts; the current Chair and Vice Chair are listed under the Alumni Council Committees section: <http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/>. The Student Volunteers Council (SVC) is one of the largest groups on campus, which sponsors a long list of projects. The Pace Center for Community Service can make suggestions of possible projects and what help is needed. Contact information for SVC, the Pace Center, Community House and other campus groups can be obtained from the Office of the Alumni Association or <http://www.princeton.edu/main/>.

**Community groups.** The Office of Community and Regional Affairs is in contact with many local community organizations and can help you match class interest to a suitable project.

**Tax-exempt restrictions.** Princeton classes receive non-profit status under the University's umbrella in order to further Princeton's mission: research/scholarship and teaching of current University students. The Internal Revenue Service requires that donations to the class organizations be related to the class mission. Service projects fall into this category only if they have in-person components that bring together classmates, thereby enhancing their connection to the class and to Princeton. Reunions engaged in hands-on projects may solicit donations for the project as part of their regular mailings or their web site. Without an in-person component, a reunion cannot solicit such funds or make such a donation. In addition, University policy prohibits using the class mailing list to solicit funds for a non-Princeton purpose. The class, however, may mention the work that is being done (without making a solicitation) and provide classmates with a contact person should they wish to follow up individually. That way, the separate organization may create its own database of donors and interested individuals.

Because of the complexity of these situations, the Community Service Chair should seek approval from the Office of the Alumni Association before beginning any community service effort and especially one that involves fundraising of any type.