

## **Interfaith Youth Connection**

### **Mission, vision, values, and activities**

#### **Mission:**

The Interfaith Youth Connection (IYC) empowers religiously diverse young people as leaders who nurture interfaith understanding, reduce prejudice and misunderstanding, and act together on common values through service and justice to transform our world.

#### **Vision:**

A network of empowered young people who are modeling cooperation across religious and other differences is cultivated, deeply immersed in their own community and values while actively seeking others. Twin Cities area faith communities value youth and equip them to be leaders both within and across traditions.

#### **Values:**

- Youth-centered and empowering: focus on building youth's strengths and potential, and involving youth in planning, implementation, reflection and evaluation
- Putting values in action: acting on the common values of service, justice, hospitality, and compassion across all religious and ethical traditions through service-learning and civic engagement
- Inclusive collaboration: representation of all communities, traditions, and identities interested in coming to the table in mutually beneficial, collaborative partnerships

#### **Purpose and activities:**

The IYC develops youth leadership, voice and agency for interfaith dialogue and civic leadership through a core Youth Leadership Team of religiously diverse youth in grades 8-12; The IYC is program of Interfaith Action of greater Saint Paul in collaboration with Augsburg University and Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas.

#### **A general framework for an Interfaith Day of Service event is:**

- Registration( Workshops and service project sign-up and Light breakfast provide by Augsburg University)
- Conduct service projects in mixed faith groups.
- Facilitate reflection in mixed faith groups, either the same or different from the service project groups.
- End with a brief closing program to thank participants and share ideas for “what next”.

There are many logistics to coordinate for the event. These include:

- Identify service projects and partners. See if the service project organizations will share information about their organizations and the issue(s) they address with the service groups.
- Reserve a central meeting location for registration, rally, closing program, and any other large group activities.
- Determine the schedule for the day. When should people arrive to register/check-in? When should you set up? When should the rally start? How long will you spend working on the service projects?
- Secure transportation to and from the service project sites.
- Determine if you will provide food (lunch, snacks) or if participants need to bring their own lunches. Purchase or get donations of food if you are providing it for participants.
- Identify (adult and youth) volunteers for the day of the event to help with leading reflection discussions, registration/check-in, set up and take down, etc. Determine if any of the service project sites have requirements for adult chaperones and make sure that each service project has the required number of adult chaperones.
- Create publicity for the event and recruit participants.
- Contact the local media to tell the stories of the event.
- Include an advocacy component.
- Seek donations from local organizations to help with the cost of the event – food (lunches/snacks), monetary, or whatever else.
- Evaluate the success of your event and get feedback from participants.
- Equipment and supplies – what equipment and supplies do you need? What signage do you need?

## **IYC Youth Leadership Team**

The IYC Youth Leadership Team is a core team of youth, grades 8-12, that meets throughout the school year for in-depth dialogue, leadership development/training, and service-learning. The Youth Leadership Team organizes and facilitates the several community events for other youth in the community.

### **Logistics:**

- **WHO:** Up to 10-12 youth in grades 8-12 from religiously/culturally diverse backgrounds (ideally balance different faith traditions, at least 3-4 traditions represented). Participants can come from anywhere in the Twin Cities metro area and do not need to be affiliated with any particular congregation or faith community.
- **WHEN:** Meets approximately twice a month, more if needed, on Sunday afternoons 2-4pm.

- **WHERE:** Meeting locations are typically either at the Interfaith Action or Augsburg University or rotating to different houses of worship, so that participants can get a chance to tour and see/learn about different traditions represented in the area.
- **WHAT:** Meetings include a mix of dialogue on topics chosen by and led by the youth themselves. Suggestions for topics may be made, but it is important that the youth choose and lead dialogue themselves. Other elements of meetings include skill-building sessions (intro to interfaith organizing, facilitating difficult conversations, etc), time for planning community events, and faith sharing or tours of houses of worship.

### IYC Passport:

## “Travel the World... Across the Twin Cities”

### GOALS:

- To connect Minnesota youth with the diverse religions and cultures here in our Twin Cities community.
- To educate Minnesota youth on who their diverse neighbors are *in a meaningful way*.
- To create opportunity for peacebuilding among neighbors through greater understanding of one another.
- To expose youth to different communities, cultures, and customs *after the Day of Service is over*.
- To recruit new youth to IYC as a culmination of these experiences.



### DAY OF SERVICE EVENT:

**“IYC PASSPORTS” [NEW!]** At the opening portion of the day, all students will receive their own “IYC Passport” that they will use during the Day of Service, *as well as after it is over*. IYC Passports will include pages of local cultural events, activities, and experiences that students are encouraged to participate in (*see below*). Each time a student participates in one of the activities listed in the Passport, they receive points. Points can earn entry into the IYC group as well as Augsburg certificates/resume builders.

- I. **Morning Workshop 1- “World Religion: 101 Workshops”** (each workshop = 50 points)
  - a. Judaism 101
  - b. Islam 101
  - c. Buddhism 101
  - d. Hinduism 101
  - e. Ethiopian Orthodox 101
  - f. Christianity 101

II. **Morning Workshop 2- “Community Cultures” [NEW!]**(each workshop = 50 points)

Description: Each Community Culture workshop features one significant\* cultural/ethnic group here in the Twin Cities. Presentations will be made by a cultural representative and include the following:

- a. Tibetan 101
- b. Ethiopian 101
- c. Somali 101
- d. Hmong 101
- e. Mexican 101

*Each Community Cultures workshop will feature each of the following important segments to help students gain meaningful perspective on general history, journey, and relationship to the community:*

- A. Geography; where their country of origin is located.
- B. Brief history of culture; ethnic groups, religion, languages spoken, etc.
- C. Reason for coming to the US and, specifically, Minnesota.
- D. Relationship they have to local culture; where does their population live, what jobs do they fill, how do they contribute to the economy, what cultural aspects do they bring (ie. shops, restaurants, artisans, religious celebration/worship, etc.)
- E. Struggles they have faced (i.e. economically, religiously, culturally, etc.)
- F. **Fun recommendations** on how students can experience their culture in the community (i.e. favorite restaurant/most authentic item on the menu, cool museums or cultural displays, events, classes, etc.) *Note: these recommendations will be listed in the IYC Passports.*
- G. **Play a short, interactive game** to get kids moving while learning.

III. **Keynote Speaker**

IV. **Lunch Break: CULTURE KIOSKS [NEW!]**

During lunch, each Community Culture (Tibetan, Hmong, Somali, Ethiopian, Mexican) will have a booth where students can come to try the food, learn more about the culture, see artifacts, posters, and do fun activities for IYC Passport points (i.e. ask for *sambusas* in Somali and receive 30 points, ask for *tamales* in Spanish and receive 30 points, etc.)

**AFTER THE EVENT: “IYC PASSPORTS” [NEW!]**

At the end of the event, students will be encouraged to keep working their way through their IYC Passports to experience as many of the listed activities and experiences as they can. If they can earn 1,000 points, they qualify for IYC membership. If they earn 5,000 points, they can receive a certificate from Augsburg. (*Note: if students attend two morning workshops and visit every Culture Kiosk, they will already have earned 250 points in their IYC Passports*)

Samples of other experiences and activities that will be listed in the IYC Passport:

- Get a henna tattoo at Karmel Mall.
- Take a yoga class at the Hindu Temple of Minnesota in Maple Grove.
- Visit Shir Tikvah for Friday evening *shabbat* service.
- Stop by the Tibetan shop at Midtown Global Market and ask about their wares.
- Go to Easter Mass at Tewahedo Ethiopian Church
- Buy a cup of Somali ‘*sha*’ from Abdi at Karmel Mall

- Visit the Somali Museum
- Visit the Somali display at the Minnesota History Center
- Eat *momo* at Gorkha Palace Himalayan restaurant
- Eat *Doro Wat* at Fasika Ethiopian restaurant in St. Paul
- Eat *sambusa* at Quruxlow in Minneapolis.
- Eat *tamales* at El Burrito Mercado Mexican market (St. Paul or Minneapolis)
- Visit Hmongtown Marketplace in St. Paul
- Plus 30 more....

\*Significant meaning: population size, contribution to economy, and impact on cultural trends

### **Recruitment:**

- Youth are typically recruited through their youth directors and religious leaders at their congregations, or sometimes by word of mouth/friends. It is important to develop positive relationships with participating congregations.
- Anyone is allowed to join, whether affiliated with a particular faith community, or any faith tradition, or not.
- Youth Leadership Team participants must fill out an application as a way to self-screen and to track important background info, but no one is turned away.

### **Cost:**

#### **Augsburg**

- —Fardosa's time
- —Student assistant's time( 10hr a week )
- —Day of Service costs
- —Outreach( Fardosa time)
- ---Meeting (\$1,000)
- Passport printing (\$500)