

SSPARK PROGRAM

**SOWING SKILLS, PASSION, ALTRUISM, &
RESPONSIBILITY IN KIDS**

"Sparking a fire within"

Kosciusko County Leadership Academy
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Introduction

Success-what is it? How do you measure it? How do you know if and when you have achieved it? These are a few of the most pondered and debated questions of our day and most likely, throughout man's tenure on earth. The dictionary defines success as the achievement of something attempted or the gaining of fame or prosperity. As with most topics there are varying perspectives as to what constitutes success. There is one thing for certain, in recent years success has been measured mostly in terms of money and possessions acquired or the position attained within the work environment. Another misguided belief is that success can only be achieved via a college degree. Parents and educators alike have done a huge disservice to our children and our nation by instilling in students a one-way-to-win mentality. The college degree equals success myth cannot be reversed overnight and progress will come only through a concerted effort on the part of parents, educators, and community leaders.

The SSPARK program would seek to bring a parent and child together with individuals experienced in skilled trades and together do good deeds for those less fortunate. The primary goal of this program would be to expose children, at an early age, to many different skills and to hopefully spark an undying interest in one or more of the skilled trades. It is also the purpose of this program to expose children to work and the great sense or gratification one can experience in both completing a task and doing something for someone else without an expectation of financial gain. It is my firm conviction that our expectations for our children must be high. We must teach children to work and acquire skills at an early age, develop a passion for something, give selflessly to and for others, and to be responsible. I believe these to be the key ingredients for success.

This paper will cover the genesis of this program idea and my personal interest in it, provide the reader with information in support of the need, and finally, a blueprint of how this program might function and the benefits that would be achieved.

Genesis of the SSPARK Program

This idea is the result of numerous personal life events, and long held beliefs about child rearing and education. The following are a few of the catalysts for this program idea.

A number of years ago while driving to work I heard a news report sighting a severe shortage of skilled tradespeople in the United States. The report stated that the problem will become worse in the coming years as more high school students are opting to go on to college and that the number of students choosing a career in the trades is declining. The dearth of skilled labor, it noted, could severely cripple our manufacturing base and the economy of the country as a whole. For several reasons this report has remained fixed in my mind. Partially because the frequency of news stories on this subject has increased in recent years. Partially because I was struck by the long term detrimental impact that this trend would have on our country. Mostly though, I thought about how I might have really enjoyed a skilled trade if only I had been exposed to more experiences along those lines when I was a youth. Many people, myself included, get a great deal of satisfaction in doing physical work that requires skill and being able to do a job from start to finish. Skilled trades are perfect for this kind of person. A Glamour magazine article titled Why not a women? Why not you? discusses the change that some women are making in their careers by moving out of the office and learning a trade. In this article the author, Laurel Touby, quotes a women who left her office job and became an electrician. " I love my job. I didn't get any sense of accomplishment after I had typed a letter, but I get such a thrill when I show my daughters the lighting I installed in a building in a shopping mall ". I believe that one of life's greatest successes is to truly love that which you do each day to make your living.

One day last summer while working in our yard I observed my six year old son from afar as he entertained himself in the large backyard sandbox. On his own he had resurrected a number of old bricks from behind our storage barn and proceeded to fill his

wheelbarrow with sand and water. Then, for the longest period of time, and many times thereafter, he meticulously laid the bricks and applied the wet sand between each one. All bricks were aligned, tapped into place, and scraped clean.

What struck me most about the above incident was not so much that he did it on his own, although I must admit, I was just a little impressed, but the fact that he was so meticulous about the work he was doing and that he was so happy about how nice it looked when he was finished. I couldn't help but wonder what would happen if he could get some exposure working with bricks at an early age. If perhaps he was able to work along with me and someone else knowledgeable about brick masonry, could it spark an interest within that might remain as he grows older?

Another key component in this program is work. One of the most often heard complaints of parents and employers is that today's children do not want to work. There seems to be a problem with motivation, the desire to work hard and stay with a job. In discussing this program with John Gradle of Milestone Construction he noted that finding highly motivated younger people who will stay with a job to gain knowledge and skill is very difficult. Many kids today are tempted to sacrifice the invaluable experience to be gained from working with a master craftsman for as little as one extra dollar per hour in wages. What is the cause of this problem and how do we go about raising motivated children who are excited about school, have many interests, and actually enjoy working.

It has always been my belief that these traits will be firmly rooted in children if taught at an early age, and then practiced day in and day out by parent and child alike. It is not enough to simply talk to children about the virtues of work and how to be enthusiastic about it. The famous pediatrician, teacher, and researcher, Dr. Benjamin Spock, states it very simply. "The best upbringing that children can receive is to observe their parents taking excellent care of themselves-mind, body, spirit. Children, being the world's greatest mimics, naturally and automatically model their parents' behavior."

The above are just a few of the catalysts for this program idea. It is my desire to change the way we view success by exposing children to many types of work, early and often and to instill in them the notion that it is more important to love what you do than to simply do something because it may be the source of significant income. In thinking about what to do for a career and considering the amount time one spends on the job the question to consider is this. Do we live to work or do we simply work to live. While the best scenario is somewhere in between, it is certain that the latter is the least desirable way to live our life. While a college degree is the perfect path to success for some it is clearly the wrong path for many more. With more open-mindedness on the part of parents and educators regarding alternate options for careers many kids can pursue skilled jobs that they love to do and at the same time feel good about their choice.

The need for SSPARK (supporting information)

In evaluating the need for this program I have researched the following topics. What is the current status of skilled work and workers in America? What are parents and educators doing with regard to career tracking of students and the results of the college degree only mentality? What are the benefits of work and helping others.

Skilled work and workers

In researching the status of skilled work and workers today I wanted to find out if there is plenty of jobs and secondly, what is the outlook for filling those jobs with qualified people?

The first thing I did was talk with some local contractors about their individual businesses and if there was any shortage of qualified people in this area. If the business is larger in size and has a full schedule of year round work then this is not a big issue since a core group of experienced tradesman are on staff. As for smaller businesses it is more of a problem since work schedules may be more erratic and subcontracting is more prevalent. One contractor noted that it is difficult to find first rate carpenters and that carpenter helpers, those learning the trade, are very hard to find. Carpenter helpers must be energetic and hard working. Sometimes high schools are used to seek potential candidates. Concrete workers are limited in this area, and most are older in age. While brick masons are available, they too are mostly older in age. One theme came through clear in these discussions. It is hard to find the right person for the job with skill, a good attitude, and motivation. One contractor noted that in years past it was common for people to frequent the worksite inquiring about potential work. These days, he noted, it is a rare occurrence.

What is the situation with skilled work in other parts of the country? I found no shortage of information indicating that there is indeed a real shortage of qualified skilled

labor. A recent article in the Indianapolis Star newspaper noted that one of the most significant problems builders believe that they'll face this year is the availability and the cost of skilled labor. At seminar after seminar in Houston, the complaint was the same: There's plenty of labor, but not enough top-notch labor, especially framers and bricklayers. At one seminar on the future of housing, participants noted that while the materials being used on houses are much better than they were at the beginning of the century, the craftsmanship is not. "Crafts aren't being passed down from generation to generation" said J. Carson Looney, an architect from Memphis, Tennessee. "What is so wrong with being a third generation framer?" Builders are battling for a limited supply of top of the line subcontractors, and paying a hefty price for what they get.

In some cases, even the assurance of good pay is not enough to entice people to enter a skilled trade. A September 1996, article in the Orange County Register titled "Plumbing Trade's Not Flush with Applicants" discusses the difficulty in finding people who want to be plumbers primarily because it is hard work and not a sanitary occupation. Dennis Anderson, owner of a plumbing service, solicits potential candidates with offers to train them and provide good pay but even with offers of eventual pay at \$60,000.00 per year he can't fill his repair trucks. Often, candidates will accept and then after learning that it is hard work and that you need to have good people skills they don't stick with the job. The shortage of skilled labor in service repair is an issue nationwide, according to the National Association of Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors. The biggest need in plumbing is for repair technicians, not new construction plumbers.

In 1986, Fortune magazine sighted unemployment in the construction industry at 12% nationwide. Even so, half the builders surveyed by the National Association of Home Builders said they couldn't find enough carpenters; 42% face a scarcity of brick layers. The city of Boston couldn't find enough skilled workers to rehabilitate inner city housing, so with the help of NAHB it hired local contractors to train more than 200 people in the building trades.

The October 12, 1996 issue of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel elaborated on the under supply of skilled workers. Every industry source solicited described the building industry's status as full employment. With more work than skilled workers this construction season, Wisconsin contractors and trade groups are scrambling to avert a crises during major projects. Among members of the Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, "there are a number of contractors who have had to either put off or turn down specific jobs, or delay jobs," Marketing Director Kyle Schwarm said. Schwarm's organization has boosted apprenticeships from 600 to 950 in the past four years, but the increase has merely blunted the problem, he said. The apprenticeship boost at Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors of Milwaukee has been dramatic as well. "We're beginning to see shortages, particularly in electrical, heating, ventilating, and air conditioning, and the mechanicals. The problem is not exclusive to Wisconsin, either; it's national. The problem is that the average age of construction workers is 47 years old, and there aren't enough young people entering the field to replace those who leave."

The documented information that I have seen to date suggests that indeed there is plenty of work in skilled trades if only more people would choose this route. The question still remains, why is it that fewer kids choose this route and why do kids shy away from something because it is hard work? Quite possibly, the answer lies with the current societal and educational influences that children are exposed to.

Social, Parental, and Educational Influences

In the quest to find out why fewer kids are embarking on careers in skilled trades It's important to understand the social, parental, and educational influences that our children are bombarded with on a daily basis.

For reasons that I cannot fully explain, I too fell for the misguided notion that anyone pursuing a vocation and not going on to college after high school would surely regret it and success, as I viewed it, would be limited at best. While I am ashamed just thinking of it, I still remember in high school having the opinion that "those" kids that left school

every morning to spend half a day at the vocational education center were not quite with it. This idea didn't come from home as my parents never tried to influence my opinions or choices for a career in any way. I listened to and even participated in the conversations and jokes about vocational students that often thrive in the high school environment. Anyway, I couldn't have been more wrong because many of "those" kids enjoyed what they were doing and had some focus on what it was they wanted to do after school while I went on to college and spent most of the first two years trying to determine what it was I wanted to be or do. By the way, I was not unique as most of my friends in college also entered not knowing what they wanted to do.

I obtained a college degree and while I consider it to be one of my greatest achievements I, to this day, do not know why I went to college other than for my perception that to succeed I must have a college degree. That perception, I am convinced, becomes embedded in our minds at a very early age. The medium of television and printed advertisement depicts and promotes the notion that success is found in the clean, college educated, and well dressed person who works in the office environment and who has an abundance of material possessions. This perception is reinforced in school in the clothes kids wear, the money they have to spend, and the opportunities afforded to those who's parents are financially secure. The foremost reason as to why fewer students are entering the skilled trades can be traced directly to parents and educators alike who tell kids that their generation has only "one way to win" in the game of life: namely, to get a four-year degree that will open doors to professional or managerial positions. In the April 1996 issue of *Vocational Education Journal* interview with former New York Times correspondent Hedrick Smith, Smith quoted former Wisconsin school Superintendent Bert Grover as saying "We have two tracks in American high schools-the track to college and the track to nowhere." The wisdom in pushing most students on to college is examined extensively in the April 1996 issue of *PHI DELTA KAPPAN*. The article titled *The Baccalaureate Game-is it right for all teens?* notes that while the academically talented

will in most cases succeed in college the majority of students from the academic middle who attempt to follow the above advise will fail. Of those who beat the odds and graduate, one third or more will end up in jobs they could have obtained without a four year degree. The costs of this folly, both financial and human, are staggering for students, their parents, and the nation.

Of the U.S. high school seniors in 1992 included in a study undertaken by the National Center for Education Statistics, 95% indicated that they planned to continue their education, 84% said that they planned to get at least a four-year college degree, and 33% had already decided to go on to graduate school. Nationally, less than 20% of high school students now concentrate on vocational education. Today, the high school graduate who goes directly to work or even one who matriculates in a postsecondary occupational/technical program is the exception; most try the baccalaureate game. The study also noted that 50% of all males and an amazing 69% of all females graduating in 1992 expected to be employed in the professions by the age of 30. Only 3% of males and 1% of females aspired to careers in high-skill/high-wage, nonprofessional technical occupations. These National survey results define the one-way-to-win mentality of today's adolescents.

With so many playing the baccalaureate game it is imperative that we examine the graduation rates, job outlook for those that do graduate, and the reasons why this is the predominate career path for today's children.

Several years ago, "right to know" legislation was passed that has allowed the truth to come forth regarding the actual graduation rates of those matriculating at four-year colleges. For example, among freshman entering NCAA Division I universities in 1988, slightly more than half had graduated six years later. In states with high postsecondary matriculation rates, the college dropout rate can run as high as two-thirds. According to a July 1996 news report released by the Associated Press nearly 27% of college students drop out after their first year. This information obtained from a survey of 2,564 schools

also shows the college graduation rate is at its lowest level in more than a decade. Using graduation rates alone as an indicator, about one half of those who try the baccalaureate game will fail. Nevertheless, increasing numbers of students are graduating each year with the faith that their degree will bring them professional employment.

Along with this faith is hope that the labor market demand for degree holders will increase and provide jobs commensurate with the education attained. But, as growing numbers of parents are discovering when their children graduate from college only to move home unemployed, this faith and hope is at best naive optimism. The reality is that, since the 1950s, only around 30% of all jobs have required a college degree and only 20% of all employment has been in the professional ranks. These ratios are not predicted to change in the future. According to the U.S. Department of Labor projections through the year 2005, at least one-third of all graduates of four-year colleges will not find employment commensurate with their education. The outlook is even worse for those with graduate degrees. Contrary to conventional wisdom, there is a worldwide surplus of accountants, chemists, and engineers not to mention lawyers, teachers, and marketing specialists.

With the above information in mind, why and who is creating this attitude in children that the college degree is a must. Again I sight information from the previously noted PHI DELTA KAPPAN article. The percentage of all high school students who indicated that their parents or guidance counselors advised them to attend college rose dramatically between 1982 and 1992. The greatest increase came from students who reported that their teachers or guidance counselors had recommended college. What are some of the factors as to why parents and educators have adopted this one-way-to-win mentality. For parents, having a child accepted at a prestigious four-year college has become synonymous with parental effectiveness. Other factors contributing to college mania are the cultural biases in favor of professional work, the millions spent on marketing by colleges, and the vested interest of financial institutions that reap millions from student

loans while the government (i.e., taxpayers) insures their risk. The factor that best explains this shift in educators' attitudes is economic uncertainty. National data showing higher lifetime earnings for college graduates have led educators as well as parents and the public to conclude that the causal factor is education and that a college degree will provide the same earnings benefit to today's generation as it did in the past. In fact, researchers at the U.S. Department of Labor have concluded that the lifetime earnings of individuals who work in such occupations as precision metals, the crafts, specialized repair, and other nonprofessional technical occupations will exceed the earnings of college graduates save those who are successful in finding work in the professional or managerial ranks. There are unfilled vacancies in these areas which explains why the United States annually admits roughly 25,000 foreign workers with technical skills.

This college only mentality has also generated a great deal of divisiveness as more and more unhappy young adults with unmet expectations, college dropouts and underemployed graduates alike, look for someone to blame. Also included in this situation are the students that cannot or do not play the game. These are the young adults labeled as "second class" or deemed to be outright failures because they do not go to college. A successful businessman in our community conveyed to me his never to be forgotten conversation with his high school teacher. The teacher asked him if he was going to go on to college and be successful or not go and be a bum. While he went on to graduate from college, to this day he feels only minimal gains from the experience that he feels did very little in the way of assisting him in his line of work. The sad commentary lies with the teacher who failed this student by trying to convince him that he had only one way to obtain success rather than providing open minded encouragement to alternate paths. In the end all that this instructor was remembered for was the negative statement towards those who choose not to pursue college.

Lastly, It would be naive to ignore the business aspect of higher education. An article in the March 17, 1997 issue of TIME magazine titled "Why Colleges Cost Too Much" by

Erik Larson is an examination of the cost of a college education. The article is a study of the University of Pennsylvania in specific along with information regarding costs associated with college education in general for all colleges. It noted that from the 1980-1981 school year Penn's base tuition increased 15%. Far more than the 10.3% boost in the cost of living. The following year the disparity grew starker. Penn's tuition rose 16%, 2 1/2 times the slowing rate of inflation and more than 3 1/2 times the growth in the median family income. With the huge cost increases what do students get in return. It notes that Professors spend much less time teaching undergraduates. Graduate students and adjunct faculty increasingly shoulder the load. I can personally attest to this as during my college years in the late 1970's and early 1980's a great many of my instructors were graduate students.

" The theory of it was, basically, we will raise tuition as much as the market will bear " says William Massey, a former Stanford University finance officer, and parents bore it. Throughout the 1980's parents came increasingly to feel that a college education was a necessity, a direct conduit to a high paying job. Easy financial credit, moreover, made it possible for parents to borrow large sums of money; doing so for college became socially acceptable. The main engine driving this college demand, it states, is fear-fear of a capricious new economy; fear of the new disposability of workers; fear of being disadvantaged in the hunt for a job. Parents, says Robert Zemsky, director of Penn's Institute for Research on Higher Education, see tuition they pay as buying not so much and education as a "medallion" with the power to open doors.

Regardless of the path one chooses to take in preparing for the future there is one key ingredient that must exist in order to attain a true feeling of success both personally and professionally, and that is the ability and desire to work hard.

The benefits of work and helping others

While the inner drive to work and even enjoy physical labor is probably determined somewhat by genetics, surely it can be taught and cultivated to a great extent beginning at

an early age. If children are taught and expected to carry out work related tasks in the home environment starting at an early age and required to repeat these jobs on an ongoing basis then, I believe, work will be viewed as simply part of living life rather than something to be avoided whenever possible. When parents themselves set the example by working without complaint in conjunction with large doses of encouragement and praise for a job well done then children will be on track for a life where work is viewed in a positive light and with a great deal of satisfaction. It is well known that in generations past, physical work was much more prevalent and families spent a great deal more time at home doing work together that needed to be done. Consequently, children learned to work and acquired skills from their parents early in life. Because of this lifestyle, children were exposed to many different ways in which they could earn a living and while these often entailed physical work they probably brought people a high degree of satisfaction and joy. It is also true that communities were more closely knit and people regularly reached out to others when a helping hand was needed rather than this generations preferred method of sending money to assist those in need.

Well, as we know, times have changed at home, work, and in the community. At home, many families now consist of both parents working outside the home or, sadly, there is only a single parent at home, which in most cases is the mother. This being the case, it is painfully clear why skills and strong work ethic are on the wane. In the former case, with both parents working, there is precious little time with outside work and other activities. Right or wrong most parents take the remaining time for leisurely activities and, if possible, hire others to do household chores and repairs. Also, though clearly a detrimental practice, parents spending more time away from their children tend to feel guilty and thus often too much is given to children and too little is expected. In the latter case, where the single parent struggles to support the family, children are often at home alone or with other families, and left to their own devices without much needed structure or expectations. This is the worst possible arrangement since one of the parents is missing

from the family and thus, many opportunities for learning skills and a strong work ethic are never broached. With regard to peoples jobs, it seems that much more time is being spent on the job or away from home as businesses continue to reduce their payrolls and thus expect more from fewer employees. This contributes to the reduced amount of time parents are now spending with their children. Community and neighborly involvement also suffer as families become more selfish with the limited amount of free time that exists outside of work.

I am convinced that teaching children to work is integral in raising them to be successful in life. Work is a confidence builder that propels people to work harder and experiment with new things. The practice of combining the willingness to work with doing things for those incapable of doing certain tasks on their own has far reaching benefits for all parties involved in the process. Altruism, giving of oneself simply because other people need help, is a huge self-esteem builder for kids. According to Stanley Herman, Associate Superintendent for Pittsburgh Public Schools, "There is no better way to raise the self-esteem of young people than community service. When kids feel good about themselves, attendance goes up and academic performance improves. Kids start to achieve". In the February 23, 1990 issue of Scholastic Update the article titled "The Rewards of Helping Others" focuses on benefits of helping others. The author, Lauren Tarshis states that while Altruism is a reason that kids volunteer, there are other reasons such as making new friends, gaining new perspectives on the world, learning new skills, and testing yourself in new ways. In fact, in a successful volunteer arrangement, the rewards are shared equally between the volunteer and the person he or she is helping.

Studies suggest that the practice of helping others has physical health benefits as well. People who exercise vigorously often describe feeling high during a workout and a sense of calmness and freedom from stress afterwards. Evidence reveals that these same emotional and physical changes can be produced with activity requiring much less exertion-helping others. Evidence from studies described in the October 1988 issue of

Psychology Today, begins to suggest why men involved in community organizations tend to have less disease and longer lives than those who do not serve. Interestingly, altruism's pleasure does not appear to arise from donating money, no matter how important the cause, nor from volunteering without close personal contact.

Now that we know that skilled jobs are plentiful, that we in the United States need to change dramatically the way we view these jobs, and that the willingness to work can reap huge rewards in life, is there a way to combine these things into a program that will help reverse the disappointing trends previously discussed?

SSPARK Program-structure blueprint and associated benefits

The concept of this program that has resided in my mind for quite some time is one that involves many variables coming together to accomplish the overall objective. Again, the primary objective of this program is to expose children to many different skill sets at a relatively early age with the hope that a spark of interest may be ignited that will at some point become a fire within. With the encouragement of parents and educators alike, a child's interest in a skilled profession may turn into a lifetime career opportunity that not only provides for a comfortable life but also one filled with a great deal of satisfaction. The secondary objective is to teach children that work, though not easy, can be fun and provide a great sense of accomplishment, especially when done for others less fortunate. The main vehicle for exposing children to different types of skills would come mostly from assisting those who cannot accomplish these tasks on their own. By matching an identified adult volunteer who has experience in a given skill with parent and child who lack the skill knowledge required to accomplish a given task all involved win. The volunteer who is able to pass on his or her knowledge to a young person while helping someone less fortunate, the parent who is able to learn more about various skills in order to be more self sufficient and provide further help to a child, and the child who receives exposure to many different skill sets. Just as important, the child learns how to work and at the same time experience the good feeling of doing something nice for someone unable

to do the task for themselves. Lastly, the person who is on the receiving end of the service is also a beneficiary since they not only are having a job done for them but they are providing a way for young people to become more knowledgeable at an early age.

In order to implement and insure success in a program of this complexity there are many facets that must be researched and planned in detail and this will require much more time and effort than what has been expended to date. However, some of the key aspects include development of a resource pool of volunteers, defining the types of work that can be done, determining the guidelines for who can receive this service, creating or utilizing an existing service agency to screen prospective jobs and schedule volunteers and kids, determine the best association link for this program (e.g.: schools, churches, independent), protection against injuries that could occur, and sources of money that may be required.

Development of a qualified and willing resource pool for working with the kids is probably the key element in determining the success of this program. One possibility is to seek individuals whose children are now grown and thus have a bit more time on their hands. Another promising possibility is the vast number of our senior citizens who have the most to offer in the way of skills knowledge and desire to help youngsters. I believe that many seniors would love to contribute their skills and time in an effort to raise a more well rounded generation of people. The challenge would be in developing this pool of people and segmenting them based on their skills and availability.

What age of children would this program target and what types of jobs would be included? The age issue is a tough one. My desire is to start early yet starting too early will limit the types and amount of work that can be done and also increase the potential for injuries and liability. The age range could possibly be from ages 8 through 14. These ages are old enough to be of help on a job and young enough to not have received full exposure to the one-way-to-win mentality that is so pervasive in high school.

Some have asked me about my expectations for these kids when they go to do a job. My feeling is that again, the expectation is for them to be involved. For the younger kids this

may mean observing, asking questions, and retrieving supplies but older kids would be expected to be full partners in completing the task. The only true way to learn and determine your likes and dislikes as well as achieving a sense of accomplishment is to be fully involved, "hands on" in the effort. If that is so, I am asked, doesn't that greatly limit what you can do? To impose too many restrictions on the types of jobs that can be done is to defeat the purpose of the program. The aim is not to teach kids to clean gutters and rake leaves. While these are productive jobs, it is not exposing them to the sought for exposure to skilled work. In my view this program should involve things such as auto mechanics and maintenance, brick masonry, carpentry, plumbing, basic electrical tasks, interior/exterior painting and wallpapering, and exterior home repairs to name a few. Again, the idea is to have a parent involved as well, and the amount of child involvement should be determined based on difficulty of the task and the age of the child.

Who would be eligible to receive these repair services or even want to receive these services? The targeted people would be either senior citizens who cannot do the job themselves or anybody who cannot afford to have these services done by a professional. Some may be concerned about the ability of this team (volunteer, parent, child) to do repairs equivalent in standards to a professional service. The difficulty or scope of the job will definitely dictate whether or not a professional service is required. It is not the purpose of this program to be competition to the professional services. The main focus will be on minor applications of lessor complexity. It is also not the desire for this program to be a place people can draw on simply to have a job done for free.

The above begs the question, how would you screen and organize the jobs. This is also a key to the success of this program. My initial thought is to incorporate the help of a local service agency such as Combined Community Services who is very aware of people who are in need of these services yet cannot afford them. The objective would be to screen the requests for help and then utilize the resource pool and participating parent/child pool and match those best qualified and available to do the job and schedule it

accordingly. This is not perceived to be an easy task and would require a great deal of logistical planning. I have discussed the possibility for this to happen with Marty Courtney, who oversees this organization and she has conveyed a positive feeling and willingness to work with the program.

How would this program be most successful? Should it be linked to any organization in specific? This remains unresolved in my mind. The possibility of linking this with our school system would create a needed bond with the educational aspect of the program. The school system is also viewed in a favorable light by most and would provide a much needed source for legitimacy that a newly created program requires in order to take hold. This doesn't have to be a full fledged school funded program. It could simply exist within the school environment as a service club that draws students parents into becoming more active with their children and provides a catalyst for learning skills, being with friends, working with other older skilled people, and helping others. It would also help to reverse the one way tracking that currently exists in the schools. This program could also possibly start on a smaller scale within a church environment and then expand based on need and success. This would help in the overall program development by starting small and monitoring what works and what may not. Another possibility would be to become affiliated with Combined Community Services or another established agency and thus capitalize on the familiarity of an established organization providing an anchor of support.

Unfortunately, the one roadblock that keeps surfacing in all my discussions revolves around liability and the concern that an injury of a youngster would bring about legal action against a volunteer who is helping to teach a child or action against the owner of the location where work is taking place. This could prove a difficult obstacle to overcome but unfortunately it is the world in which we now live. One option discussed with Marty Courtney is the addition of volunteers to Combined Community Services umbrella policy covering accidents/injuries. She advised that there would be an increase in the policy rates

but that possibly some donations could cover the increases. This then raises the issue of funding and just what would be required for this program.

Regarding dollars associated with operating the program, I would propose keeping this to a minimum though at this time I do not know what would be required in total. My thought would be to solicit corporate donations to cover any insurance requirements and then a small account to cover supplies that might be needed. The desired direction for operating a job would be to have the client provide any supplies that may be required and for the team to provide the labor. The small account would enable the team to provide supplies in special situations where the client is unable to assist.

As previously noted, there are many faucets to this program and, obviously, a great deal more effort is required to move this program to a workable situation. A blueprint at this stage but hopefully a full fledged and successful program in the future. It will take many more substantive discussions with local officials, companies, potential volunteers, and most importantly kids and parents to determine the level of interest and cooperation that exists.

Conclusion

What this program really boils down to is people helping people within a community. The benefit to the community with this program should not be underestimated. Everyone associated with the process wins and the short term and long term prospects for success for the people in the community will be greatly enhanced. Aside from working out the logistics of this program two main things must happen for this idea/program to succeed.

First and most importantly, parents must start early working with their children, and lead by example. One of my favorite quotes is from Albert Schweitzer, the late writer, doctor, missionary, and Nobel peace prize winner, who said "example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing". Children as young as three years in age can do

simple jobs and are excited about being able to help. A gradual increase in responsibility as children grow will instill a positive and strong work ethic that will last a lifetime.

Secondly, parents and educators must cease with the notion that there is only one way to win in this society, and begin encouraging children to pursue alternatives to college, especially when a clear interest is expressed. The perception that those interested in a skilled trade are destined for a life as a second class citizen is pure bunk and must not continue to proliferate. As noted by Ginger Packert in the June 1996 issue of PHI DELTA KAPPAN once society finally discards its snobbish notion that "kids who don't go to college are dumb" we'll realize that the high school graduates who won't continue their education in a University this year are precisely the untapped resources the American economy needs.

I want to close with a paragraph extracted from a New York Times article titled "Labor Is What Others Do For Us". In the article the author, Victor Davis Hanson, comments on this country's attitude about work and the worth of people. He notes "We send our children to computer camps so that they may learn how to gain access to information instantaneously, but most of us would never give our children a shovel and gloves and send them to dig weeds for a month so that they develop a sense of what it is to get dirty and tired for someone else. We are apparently reluctant to pay the man on his knees-, who trowels cement and provides safety, comfort and beauty through his sidewalks-, a thousandth of what we so generously give to the man who dines aloft in fine restaurants, packaging a merger. Without a debate, we in this country have decided that the men and women who hoe, stoop and build are not of the same worth as those who do not".

It is high time that the adults of this society begin reevaluating just what it is that constitutes true success in this life, for our children and this great country of ours cannot afford to continue down the one-way-to-win path. For sure, it is now becoming increasingly clear that the college degree and an abundance of money and possessions do

not constitute success. True success will reside with those who possess skills, have passion for whatever it is they choose to do, give and do for others freely, and become responsible citizens. Reversing peoples actions and thoughts is not an easy or quick process but with so much at stake do we really have a choice?

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