

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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FACT SHEET

POINTS OF LIGHT INITIATIVE

"From now on in America, any definition of a successful life must include serving others."

CHALLENGE

Though America is at peace and more Americans are enjoying a greater degree of prosperity than ever before in our history, we still have work to do. As long as millions of Americans are illiterates, drop-outs, drug abusers, pregnant teens, delinquent or suicidal young people, AIDS victims and among the homeless and hungry, America has not yet fulfilled its promise. Our challenge is to overcome the disintegration of communities, large and small. While the government's role is critical, government cannot overcome this challenge alone.

MISSION

The President believes in the readiness and ability of every individual and every institution in America to initiate action as a "point of light." Meaningful one-to-one engagement in the lives of others is now required to overcome our most serious national problems. The growth and magnification of "points of light" must now become an American mission.

STRATEGY

- I. CLAIM PROBLEMS AS YOUR OWN
- II. IDENTIFY, ENLARGE AND REPLICATE WHAT IS WORKING
- III. DISCOVER AND ENCOURAGE NEW LEADERS

I. CLAIM PROBLEMS AS YOUR OWN

A. The President's Call for Action

The President calls on all Americans and all American institutions, large and small, to make service of central value in our daily life and work.

The President calls on the heads of businesses and professional firms to include community service among the factors considered in making hiring, compensation and promotion decisions.

The President calls on newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, cable systems and other media institutions to identify service opportunities, spotlight successful service initiatives and profile outstanding community leaders regularly.

The President calls on state and local education boards to uphold the value of service and to encourage students, faculty and personnel to serve others.

The President calls on college and university presidents to recognize the value of community service in considering applicants, to uphold the value of community service and to encourage students, faculty and personnel to serve others.

The President calls on not-for-profit service organizations to build the capacity to absorb increasing numbers of volunteers in purposeful roles.

The President challenges all young people to lead the nation in this movement of community service through the "YES (Youth Engaged in Service) to America" initiative. The President will call all young people to help overcome society's challenges by serving others through existing organizations or new initiatives.

He will also challenge:

- o Leaders from all institutions to engage their organizations in the development of young people;
- o Community leaders and students to reach out to alienated young people and develop community service opportunities which redirect their lives in a positive way;
- o Community service organizations to build the capacity to absorb large numbers of young people in purposeful community service.

Through the foundation, the President will:

- o Select the President's National Service Youth Representatives who will lead other young people in community service in their regions, suggest ways that other young people can engage in community service and assist in developing and implementing local programs;
- o Initiate the President's National Service Youth Leadership Forums; and
- o Present the President's National Service Youth Leadership Awards to honor outstanding youth community leaders.

YES to America is not a federal government program, but a nationwide service movement. It is:

- o A movement that is grass-roots and community-based rather than devised in and imposed from Washington;
- o A movement that does not compensate people with federal dollars for what should be an obligation of citizenship;
- o A movement that integrates service into young people's normal life and career pattern, developing in them a lifelong commitment to service rather than a temporary, one or two year involvement.

B. One-to-One Problem Solving

Every individual should "connect" with his or her institution - businesses, professional firms, the media, labor, education, religion, civic groups, associations of all kinds and not-for-profit service organizations - and engage in the lives of others in need on a one-to-one basis. Examples of the kinds of engagement the President calls for include:

- o starting a literacy program to teach every employee or member who wants to learn to read;
- o "adopting" a school, class or single student, providing tutoring, computers and other learning aids, food, clothing or shelter for each student who needs them;
- o "adopting" a nursing home, offering comfort and cheer;

- o starting a one-to-one mentoring program for **needy young people;**
- o forming a consortium to make decent, affordable housing available to the **homeless;**
- o contributing and distributing surplus food to soup kitchens each day to feed the hungry.

Individuals wishing to help another in any of the above ways independently of an institution are encouraged to establish a **one-to-one relationship** with an individual in need.

II. IDENTIFY, ENLARGE AND REPLICATE WHAT IS WORKING

The President will serve as Honorary Chairman of a foundation called the **"Points of Light Initiative."**

The President will convene an advisory committee to make recommendations (within 45 days of its first meeting) on the structure and composition of the foundation and the legislation most appropriate to accomplish the purposes of the President's national service initiative.

The President will seek a Congressional appropriation of \$25 million annually for the foundation, which will, in turn, seek to match that amount from **private sector contributions.**

The President will challenge each Governor to replicate this initiative in each state and encourage state and local leaders to develop **"Points of Light Working Groups"** composed of community leaders. These groups will marshal resources within their communities and deploy them to overcome local problems.

The President believes that **virtually every problem in America is being solved somewhere.** There are already countless service initiatives working successfully throughout America. However, these successful initiatives are too often isolated and unknown to others. These initiatives must be replicated over and over again by individuals and teams until everyone is connected to someone, **one-to-one.**

A. Peer-to-Peer Working Groups

Through a foundation initiative to be called the **"ServNet Project"**, corporations, professional firms, unions, schools, religious groups, civic groups and not-for-profit service organizations will be asked to donate the services of some of their most talented and promising people for a period of time.

These extraordinary individuals will form and lead **peer-to-peer working groups**, e.g., lawyers going to fellow lawyers, teachers to fellow teachers, union members to fellow union members, bringing examples of successful initiatives and providing training, technical assistance and other support to enable other institutions to devise similar initiatives.

B. Linking Servers to Needs

One of the foundation's objectives is to help to improve existing methods of matching would-be volunteers with purposeful service opportunities.

Over time, through an initiative called the **"ServLink Project"** the foundation will stimulate the development through private sector resources of **"technology links"** between those who wish to serve and those who need service (e.g., telephone calls, interactive computers, etc.).

Volunteer centers should be easily accessible to all Americans in their neighborhoods, **matching people with service opportunities**. Such contact points may be in a place of worship, union hall, library, fire station, business building, service group headquarters or neighborhood home.

In addition, every bank, credit card issuer, telephone and utility company will be asked to **include in billing and statement envelopes** printed information about how people and their institutions can become engaged in serving others.

C. Recognition and Awards

In order to encourage others to engage in service, every newspaper, magazine, radio and television station will be asked to **identify service opportunities, spotlight successful service initiatives and profile outstanding community leaders regularly**.

The **"President's Build A Community Awards"** will honor those people and institutions who have worked together to rebuild families or to revitalize communities.

Through the foundation, the President will **recognize and present awards and other forms of commendation** to talented community leaders and successful initiatives that are solving the nation's most critical social problems.

III. DISCOVER AND ENCOURAGE NEW LEADERS

America's community service movement must have the **strongest, most creative leadership** nationally and locally. Such leadership must be constantly recruited.

The foundation, with the help of existing organizations, will identify the most promising new leaders in all walks of life, who are not now engaged in community service, and **encourage them** to devote part of their talent and energy to community service.

The foundation will give special attention to **young people** and to those who have not had the opportunity to fulfill their leadership potential.

IV. CONCLUSION

The President's national service initiative focuses on the most critical domestic challenges facing the nation today. These problems were long in coming and cannot be solved overnight. But if each American citizen and each American institution responds to the President's call to engage "one-to-one" in the life of another person in need, this initiative will be the most comprehensive and inclusive movement of our time. This movement can dramatically reverse negative trends on many fronts and ensure the fulfillment of America's promise.