



Cheyenne River Youth Project™

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Service Group Information

Introduction:

The Cheyenne River Youth Project has a long history of working with volunteer groups from all over the country. Hosting service groups has been an exciting challenge for us, as well as a source of new ideas, creativity and support. Service groups help us to provide that one-to-one contact with the children that might not be possible at other times due to our small staff size. In addition, many service groups help us to complete large projects within our facilities or the community, like repairing homes, or working in our organic garden. Service Groups also get the chance to help out at the local food pantry and Elderly Nutrition Center to give the participants a more thorough experience of the community.

Participating in a service program shows us that you have decided to spend your free time doing meaningful work, which is wonderful. We appreciate that you are giving of yourself and of your time. Working for the Cheyenne River Youth Project is not easy. We expect a lot from our volunteers because we simply have to. Non-profit work requires a lot of energy and understanding, especially because things are not always able to work out on our desired schedule. The workdays are very long, and can be exhausting, but relating with the children or seeing a large project completed are great rewards for your hard work! When a family is able to live in their home again, because you repaired their water-heater, or a child finally participates because you took the time to encourage and talk to him or her.... that is a wonderful experience. However, the experience is not manufactured simply by your being there. The Cheyenne River Youth Project can give you the tools you need to have a great time, but it is up to you to make it. See the "Tips" section below for how you can help make the best of your experience.

Your Work:

Throughout the year, the Cheyenne River Youth Project plans around visits from service groups, so that the projects that require the most people-power can be undertaken while groups are here. These projects are often essential to the maintenance of our building or garden, or important projects within the community that we just do not have the staff to take care of any other time. Please try to understand that these projects are as important as working with the kids. It is just as essential to have a clean and safe building, as it is to have strong and effective programs for the kids.

Volunteer Groups will also help with fundraising. It is optimal to have a fundraiser during the day before the kids get home from school. While one part of the group works on other projects, a smaller part of the group will get the chance to meet the community and help raise money. We do this all of the time, so there is no need to be nervous or afraid. The community supports us and thinks we do good work, so you don't have to "sell the organization", but you might have to sell cookies! We have



many regular fundraisers, but we are always open to new ideas, so feel free to brainstorm before you arrive.

We also utilize our volunteers to help out organizations who have no access to volunteer help outside of the community. Julie Garreau, the executive director of the Cheyenne River Youth Project, has a special connection with the Elderly Nutrition Center across the parking lot from our youth center. Her mother directs the program! We try to help out Lyonne (Julie's mom) whenever possible. Volunteers always love spending a couple of hours there because they get to meet the elders of the community and learn more about the history of Cheyenne River. Occasionally volunteers also help out at the Food Pantry, if needed, to distribute food to the community. It is important to see the effects of poverty and the solutions that communities are providing for these problems.

Of course, the most exciting and wonderful work you will do is with the kids! The kids are in school at this time of year, of course, so they arrive after 3pm at the youth center. They usually know when a group is coming and attendance skyrockets. You have their attention right away; you just have to direct it. Planning activities for the kids, keeping them involved, playing outside and just giving them attention will keep them coming back throughout your visit. They remember groups from three years ago that had really great games and ideas, so your efforts will not go unnoticed! We make a snack and a meal each day for the kids. The volunteer group will usually plan these meals utilizing what we have available in our pantry and refrigerator. Creativity is key here, as well as attention to nutrition. The kids stay until 7 or 8pm, after which the groups and long-term volunteers will put everything back in order and clean for the next day.

Your Education

While you are with the Project, we try to plan speakers from the community to talk to groups about the history of the reservation, political and cultural details, legal aspects of land claims and treaties, etc. Please respond to us early about what areas your group is most interested in so that we can plan accordingly. Keep in mind that most people have very full schedules and we are not always able to arrange speakers on the most convenient days or times.

In addition, it is important for the group to remember to ask questions! Our staff and long-term volunteers are always available and if they can't answer your question, they can probably point you in the right direction. There are many concepts and traditions that might seem foreign to you, and understanding them is a key part of having a good experience with the Project.

Your Donation

Just three short years ago, if you had come to volunteer with the Cheyenne River Youth Project, you would have had a much different experience. Back then, the Project was located in a converted bar on the city's Main Street (hence our local name "The Main"). This building had a very small kitchen, and one room for the children's activities. The windows would not open or shut correctly, and there was certainly no space for volunteer quarters or offices. When volunteers came to work with the Project, they could see how much was needed because it was clearly in front of them. Now, with our new building, one thing that is harder is showing people how much it takes to keep the programs running, to house volunteers, to keep the building maintained. Volunteers see the beautiful facility and forget how much more it costs now to operate it. We never had to consider so much water and electricity consumption in the last building because there was only one sink and two lights! Now, if we have thirty people stay with us for a week, you can imagine what a difference that makes. Not just in water and electricity, but also in supplies like toilet paper, soap, and cleaning supplies. It all adds up. This is why most volunteer groups offer a donation to the program. We suggest \$50 per person in the group. This donation ensures that our budget goes primarily to the programs and the kids. We thank you for your understanding in advance. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Julie Garreau at the youth center. Remember to send in any donations before you arrive if possible, so that we can purchase supplies in advance.

Tips for a Great Spring Break with CRYP

- 1.) **Keep an upbeat attitude!** It helps everyone get through a long day when you try to work together and keep each other going.
- 2.) **Be Flexible!** Everyone will be busy at the youth center, so try to understand that things don't always get done on the most convenient schedule. If we don't tell you often enough, we appreciate you're coming!
- 3.) **Talk to the Elders!** There are elders at the Nutrition Center who remember what it was like to be taken from their homes to boarding school, who still speak the language, who are great storytellers. Develop relationships. Many of our elders also have grandchildren or great-grandchildren who come to the Main. Get to know them and their young relatives!
- 4.) **Have Fun!** The kids have fun when you're having fun. They can sense if you are bored or unhappy. If there is something troubling you, see a staff member. If there is nothing to do, make something up! Try to remember what games you played as a child and then teach the kids who to play it with you. Keeping an upbeat attitude is important not only for your own well being but also for that of your co-participants and the kids.
- 5.) **Keep the kids busy!** When the kids have nothing to do- that is when trouble starts. If you have planned a craft and some of the kids aren't into it, have a few people take those kids who don't want to participate outside for a game. If you are unsure of what to plan for them, ask a staff member or another volunteer for suggestions. Utilize the creative, sporty, or artistic people in your group to plan activities. Everyone has something to share!
- 6.) **Get some background information!** If you want to understand a little more about our kids and the culture of the community, do some background reading before you come. Talk to Julie about suggestions, or your group leader. Information is also available on the tribes website at www.sioux.org.
- 7.) **Get your rest!** Your days will be very long and tiring. Make sure you get to bed at a decent hour. Tired volunteers are not at their best the next day, and you only have a week to really get yourself into things, make the most out of it!

What to bring:

It can be cold in the springtime, so remember your warm clothing. Also, bring work clothes that you can get dirty and some comfortable shoes. You'll be running on the playground a lot! You are also welcome to bring any instruments or pictures or books that you would like to share with the kids, just please remember that although we can lock your room during the day, not to bring anything very expensive or precious. You will need to bring bedclothes or a sleeping bag and a pillow, towels, shampoo, etc. We have some mats, but not enough for everyone so if you need an air mattress, bring it along. If you take any medications or have any allergies that the staff needs to know about, please let us know before you arrive.

Although the group is welcome to eat with the kids, you will need to purchase food for breakfast and lunch and any other food items you require. You will have use of the kitchen and all of our pots and pans, etc. There are two grocery stores at which most food items can be purchased, please see below.

General Information:

While you are working with the Cheyenne River Youth Project, you will most likely get a few hours each day to yourself, as well as one full day off. Below, we have listed some possible places you might like to visit or need to visit while you are here:

- 1.) Lakota Thrifty Mart- Local grocery store. LTM is rather large and you should be able to find most of what you need here. There is also a small grocer on Main Street, but they tend to be a little more expensive.
- 2.) Cultural Center- you can find books, CDs, Jewelry and other information about the Lakota at the

center. We have many local artists who come and sell their crafts directly to volunteers, but some jewelry and clothing can only be found there. If you are interested in a quilt, please talk to Julie, as we have a less expensive connection.

3.) Prairie Edge- A Local clothing a card shop where you can have T-Shirts made, get postcards, or any item of clothing you might have forgotten.

4.) Video Stores- There are two video shops in Eagle Butte. You can rent videos under Julie's name, but please, if you have any fees, pay them before you leave.

5.) The Diamond A- Local Steak Restaurant. Really great food at a reasonable price!

6.) The Outrider Cafe-Local Breakfast place. Great omelettes and pancakes! Good start to the day!

In addition, please remember that while you are working with the Cheyenne River Youth Project, you are our representatives within the community. Please refrain from tobacco use on the Main grounds, or where children are present. Alcohol and Drug use are, of course, prohibited. We thank you in advance for your understanding.

FAQS

1.) Who will be supervising us with the kids?

You will be under the direct supervision of our long-term volunteers and Elizabeth Schwind, the Programs Manager. You can always go to the Executive Director, Julie Garreau, as well with questions. You will receive an orientation upon arrival.

2.) What if something happens with a child that I don't feel prepared to deal with?

If at anytime you feel a situation is out of control, get a staff member immediately. **You are not responsible for serious discipline issues or behavioral problems.** If a child confides in you about an abusive situation, you are required to tell a staff member. We are bound by law to report any cases to the child protection services. Do not promise secrecy to any child concerning this issue. If there is an emergency, call the police. The number will be by the phone in the kitchen.

3.) Will I get some time to go to powwows or ride horses?

These things are possible, but have to be arranged on your own time. We can help you find a contact, but then the arrangements will have to be up to you. We don't have vehicles for volunteer use, so you might have to rely on a staff member to take you if it is possible.

4.) How old are most of the kids?

We generally have participants between the ages of 4 and 15, however we do have some special needs participants who are 18 or 20 years old. The majority of the kids are between 7 and 12.

5.) How many other volunteers will there be?

Generally, we have 3-5 long-term volunteers living with us at the youth center. We also receive many service groups during the year, so you might be working with another service group that is participating at the same time. This can be a lot of fun, even if it is a little crowded!

6.) Where do the other volunteers come from?

Many of our volunteers are young people who are taking a break from studying. We also have many volunteers that come from abroad (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, etc.) to learn more about Native Americans culture and work with kids. We have had seniors in the past who have come to volunteer after retirement, which adds a different and wonderful dimension to the Program, and many adults who just want to do something different.

7.) What if I want to come back and volunteer for longer?

That would be GREAT! Just talk to a staff member about how to apply. All fees are waived for return volunteers. Assignments are for six weeks to one year in duration with some exceptions.

8.) What about speakers and cultural information?

We do our best to ensure that you get plenty of information while you are volunteering at the Cheyenne River Youth Project. We often invite community members to share their thoughts with our visiting groups. Please let us know what you are most interest in so that we can prepare. You can also get cultural information from our local cultural center.

9.) How do I get one of those great Cheyenne River Youth Project T-Shirts or Sweatshirts?

We're so happy you asked! You can purchase T-Shirts and Sweatshirts directly from the youth center while you're there. We will even throw in a free Running Strong for American Indian Youth T-Shirt!

If you have any questions that are not on this list, please feel free to contact us!