

# CASE STUDY: SERVING THE REGION

## HANDS ON GREATER PORTLAND'S E4 SUSTAINABILITY TEAMWORKS TEAM

### COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

Connecting the Why and the How

Eight students from Portland Community College (PCC) and four community members joined a Hands On Greater Portland TeamWorks team, in April and May, 2014, to explore education for sustainable development. They participated in a series of lectures, readings, and service projects focused on the 4 "Es" of sustainability: Education; Environment; Economy; and Equity.

### GOALS

- Explore local E4 sustainability challenges
- Identify existing sustainability education initiatives
- Empower participants to recognize the contributions they can make in their communities
- Engage participants in meaningful service projects
- Foster citizenship and social sustainability through community-based learning
- Facilitate reflection on the quality and impact of their service

"OUR HANDS ON  
TEAMWORKS TEAM  
HELPED ME LEARN THAT I  
CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
IN MY COMMUNITY."  
~TEAMWORKS  
PARTICIPANT

The TeamWorks model was developed by Hands On Greater Portland in order to deepen the engagement of community member in service projects, so that participants could learn the structural and cultural foundations of why they should address social, economic, and environmental issues and how they can make a difference.

RCE Greater Portland Coordinator and Sociology Professor, Kim Smith, served as the Team Leader and organized the TeamWorks' learning objectives. Hands On Greater Portland's TeamWorks

### E4 TEAMWORKS SCHEDULE

#### **Teamworks Kick-Off**

Thursday, April 10th,  
5:15 - 7:00 pm

#### **Potluck in the Park**

Sunday, April 13th,  
2:00 - 6:00pm

#### **Wisdom of the Elders**

Thursday, April 17th,  
3:00-5:00pm

#### **Earth Day**

**Presentation: Finding  
Solutions through  
Sustainable**

#### **Development**

Thursday, April 24th,  
3:00 - 5:00pm

#### **Comcast Cares Day:**

#### **Centennial School**

#### **Beautification**

Saturday, April 26th,  
8:00am - 1:00pm

#### **The Rebuilding Center**

Thursday, May 1,  
6:00-9:15pm

Coordinator, Melia Tichenor, scheduled all of the service projects with established partners, based on the E4 themes.

Reflection exercises, evaluation forms, and reflection papers were embedded into the service projects, following each session in order to help participants recognize the benefits of their actions, as well as ways that the projects could be improved.

## EVENTS IN DETAIL:

### INTRODUCTORY SESSION

It is common to feel overwhelmed by the scale of environmental and social problems in our world, but our team focused on how we can become educated, empowered, and engaged. This introductory reflection session explored the core foundations of social problems and how we can overcome them, by combating thought traps, creating cycles of hope, and identifying ways to participate in sustainable solutions.

### SESSION 2: ECONOMY

#### POTLUCK IN THE PARK

Potluck in the Park has been serving a free hot meal to anyone in need - no questions asked - since 1991. Every Sunday, rain or shine, 52 weeks a year, dozens of volunteers provide a hot meal in downtown Portland, turning a public park into a community of those wishing to serve anyone in need. We joined in the meal serving experience, serving close to 600 people, and reflected on the economic conditions of our community.



### SESSION 3: EQUITY

#### Wisdom of the Elders Film Premiere



Wisdom of the Elders is a non-profit committed to preserving and sharing traditional knowledge. We viewed two films about the Alaska Native response to climate issues and the importance of Native communities' unique earth-based cultures. The films were followed by a dialogue with local leaders, with time for audience questions and feedback, giving the community a voice in important local climate issues we will be facing in the years ahead.

## SESSION 4: EARTH DAY PRESENTATION:

### Finding Solutions through Sustainable Development

45 community members and students joined Teamworks leader, PCC sociology professor Dr. Kim Smith, to learn about international and regional sustainable development goals and how the Greater Portland Sustainability Education Network (GPSEN) is building opportunities to participate in E4 solutions, focused on the environment, education, economy, and equity. This event posed the question: "Can you envision Portland as a healthy, just, and thriving region where sustainability education is prioritized and everyone has opportunities to shape a more sustainable future?"

## SESSION 5: EDUCATION

### Comcast Cares Day Centennial School Beautification

Bright and early, we joined in the efforts of Hands On Greater Portland's annual Comcast Cares Day event and helped with a school beautification project at the Centennial School, which serves students from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. We rolled up our sleeves and painted, mulched, weeded, planted trees, scrubbed, and decorated rooms. Joining close to 300 other volunteers, we made a huge difference in a short amount of time. All of our TeamWorks volunteers tried to imagine how the students would feel when they came to school on Monday.



## SESSION 6: ENVIRONMENT

### The Rebuilding Center

Reduce, recycle, reuse! We helped reduce the flow of useable building materials into the waste stream by volunteering at the Rebuilding Center's non-profit store for used building materials. We did a truly hands-on project, by sorting and de-nailing piles of donated wood. The Rebuilding Center provided all

of the tools and training that we needed and the volunteer director even joined us for our final reflection session at a local restaurant afterwards.



## RESULTS

- 11 participants completed the TeamWorks team
- Over 575 total community members engaged over all in the events
- 152 total hours of volunteer time were contributed by TeamWorks participants
- 7 local sustainability organizations benefitted from service projects
- Over 600 meals were served to those in need in Portland
- 75 students and community members screened the Wisdom of the Elders films and participated in group discussions about Native cultures and climate change
- 9 TeamWorks participants and over 400 Comcast employees engaged in the Centennial Beautification Project. 55 trees were planted, 2 tons of mulch was spread, and 7 school rooms and hallways were scrubbed and painted at a local elementary school
- Over 100 pieces of recycled lumber were de-nailed and made ready for resale
- Two students have joined additional TeamWorks teams and one has become a Team Leader.

## EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS

### A Great Success!

The team filled up quickly and feedback was incredibly positive. As part of the community-based learning model, we held reflection exercises after each service activity. Feedback was also solicited through reflection papers, evaluation forms, and a survey conducted by Hands On Greater Portland. Questions focused on:

- How the experience deepened participants' understanding of the issue
- Whether the team engaged in meaningful discussion related to the TeamWorks topic
- How the team helped participants feel connected to other people who care about the well-being of the larger community.
- How confident participants would be to know where to go for connections, resources, and support if they wanted to further impact the topic addressed by the TeamWorks team.

According to the evaluations, participants gained:

- new skills
- new knowledge and understanding
- a sense of community
- connection to non-profit organizations
- an opportunity to take action
- friends

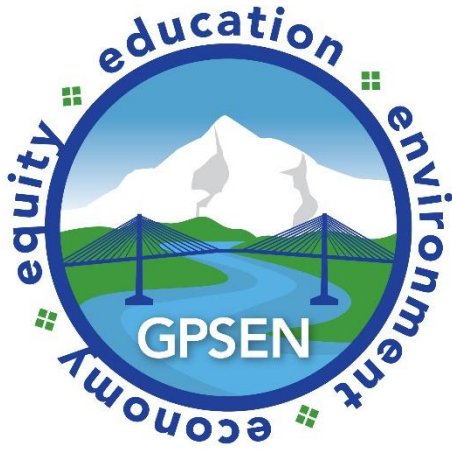
Most of the feedback moments of helping an understanding the scale by PCC's Environmental suggested that applied understanding of class power and efficacy, as know each other and

“IT WAS FUN AND EDUCATIONAL. I HAD A GREAT TIME DOING ALL OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES. TALKING TO LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS HAS A GREAT EFFECT ON ONE’S ATTITUDE ON BEING POSITIVE ABOUT SUCH HEAVY TOPICS.”  
~TEAMWORKS EVALUATION

emphasized memorable individual or the value of of the issues. Evaluations Sociology students learning increased their materials and their sense of well as helped them get to their communities.

The only suggestions for improvements included recommendations to make sure that participants have access to all of the service sites, that members can easily communicate with each other, and that future projects continue to emphasize the E4 model.

The core lesson learned is that individuals can make a big difference when they work with others. Together, we can have a big impact!



## **GREATER PORTLAND SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION NETWORK**

A Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development

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For more information, visit the RCE Greater Portland website:

[www.pcc.edu/about/sustainability/regional-center-expertise/](http://www.pcc.edu/about/sustainability/regional-center-expertise/)

And Hands on Greater Portland's website: [www.handsonportland.org](http://www.handsonportland.org)

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