

Mutualism and Cooperation

The YSC Experience: Tomorrow's Future Today

Asking group leaders of the Youth Service Cooperative (YSC) to describe their impressions of being involved in such an experience is a little like asking a child to tell you all about a brand new *Tonka* truck. We were amazed at just how incredible and how much fun it was to work with the young people chosen to participate in SSQ's Youth Co-op. We couldn't help but be astonished at the originality and initiative they showed in everything that they managed to accomplish each day. The extraordinary potential within each and every young co-operant simply astounded us!

This past summer, the members of the *Teen Vision Co-op* aimed high and blazed a new trail. They concocted a range of international culinary delights, cleaned desks and dusted off computer keyboards. They lovingly created personalized coffee mugs and threaded countless beads to create exquisite necklaces and bracelets. They even got down on their knees to weed flower beds and shine shoes! At the same time, they also found the time to organize a hot dog lunch (a long-standing treat for SSQ employees) and hold a used book sale to help empty out overstuffed cupboards. And, finally, they even made a car wash service available and had some fun doing so with the occasional water fight to cool down under the hot summer sun.

Members of the co-op could be seen around Head Office last summer, and their enthusiasm could certainly be heard ringing out through the building. But what do we really know about any of them? We really had the opportunity to get to know them and are proud to report that SSQ's 2005 co-operants were imaginative, energetic, inquisitive and committed. Together, they learned valuable management skills, developed their entrepreneurial spirit and gained confidence in their ability to take decisions and actually make things happen. They took their role seriously and delivered the goods. Financially speaking, the *Teen Vision Co-op* generated a net profit of \$3,489.83 – but in terms of personal growth, the benefits will hopefully inspire them for many years to come.

As group leaders, we must admit that we were hooked on the SSQ Youth Co-op right from day one. We experienced a whole range of emotions as the project went through its ups and downs, and loved every minute of a summer experience that went by far too quickly. We sincerely hope that SSQ's Youth Co-op will go on to prosper for years to come – not just so that more young people can benefit from such an enriching experience, but also to give other group leaders such as ourselves the unique opportunity to see just how much potential the youth of today have to offer, to have the chance to be able to listen to them and to offer them advice, to hopefully inspire confidence in them... and just to be there for them.

One thing's for sure, an initiative such as the Youth Service Cooperative will always be a winner, because no matter what difficulties are encountered or successes achieved... the experience is sure to always be a unique one.

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SSQ Youth Co-op Group Leaders
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