IncREDible Day of Action

Grant Category: Community Outreach

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Partners:
New Student Orientation Program, Student Life Offices,
Enrollment Services Offices, and Residential Life.

Summary: Each fall new students participate in orientation which prepares them to be successful academically and socially before school begins. However, one missing link is how students can get involved and connected to their community. The IncREDible Day of Action would be a campus wide one day service event that would be part of orientation in which faculty, staff, and students would soar into the Cheney and Spokane community and make a difference. Service projects would be identified over the summer and participants would have an opportunity to tangibly see the difference they made through the Day of Action.

Detailed Proposal: In September, as a part of Eastern’s new student orientation program, the entire freshman class, new transfer students, student orientation sponsors, community advisors, ASEWU, Greek community, orientation leaders, faculty and staff participate in a day of service called the IncREDible Day of Action.

The project students undertake, and the logistical support required for the project will be determined during the summer months by the Director of Residential Life, Coordinator of New Student Orientation, and a student employee. Projects could include: painting fences or buildings and spreading sand for the playground at a local school or public park; cleaning up the local Little League field; landscaping the grounds and interior painting of a non-profit, providing mentoring at a local public school, etc.

We would attempt to select projects that provide students with the following: an opportunity to see they can make a tangible difference as new members of the local community; a shared experience of service; an example of civic engagement opportunities they might participate in during their time at Eastern. Most importantly, the project – an outreach effort – is about having a positive relationship between the university and the local community.

To accomplish the service projects we would identify the following, as appropriate:

- number of people required
- supplies needed
- skills requested
- transportation needs to and from location
Students would have the opportunity to identify the service project they are most interested in and we would try our best to match them up. Trip leaders would be identified from faculty and staff and would be required to attend a two-hour training on safety, expectations, and how to engage students effectively during their civic/service project.

Additionally we would work with the Alumni Office to communicate with Eastern Alumni to join the incREDible Day of Service if they wish by join this effort in their communities.

**Statement of the Problem:** The orientation program at Eastern does an excellent job preparing students academically and socially to be successful at Eastern. However, we have not incorporated into orientation an expectation for and experience with community service and citizenship.

Eastern Washington University’s mission is to prepare broadly educated, technologically proficient, and highly productive citizens to attain meaningful careers, to enjoy enriched lives, and to make contributions to a culturally diverse society.

The IncREDible Day of Action would do just this by having students participate in a service project with faculty and staff. Research states that college students who participate in civic engagement learning activities not only earn higher grade point averages but also have higher retention rates and are more likely to complete their college degree. Additionally, instilling the value of service to students in college will increase the possibility of them being involved in their community upon graduation. [http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/A-Promising-Connection-corrected.pdf](http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/A-Promising-Connection-corrected.pdf)

If diversity is broadly defined to include social and economic differences, life experience, ethnicity, race, etc., then the populations of students who participate as leaders in this community project and those new to EWU who will be participating reflect this diversity. By engaging the local community in a positive way, we move beyond a “typical” us/them, town/gown perspective that may tend to homogenize students and people from Cheney. The power of this proposal is the action oriented, experiential aspect—we are not just talking about diversity, or about making change, we’re showing up to do something positive in the community. And while that is not revolutionary or unique by any means, it sets a tone for at least some of the new students at EWU and indicates the university’s commitment to this perspective of engagement to change for how EWU and the local community know one another.

**Project Objectives:**
- Build positive partnerships between university and our community
- Instill in our students the importance of service
- Have a positive impact on our community
- Build community amongst students, faculty, and staff.