

## community SERVICE & SERVICE learning



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— Casey Sharbaugh, Class of 2007

## REACHING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM INTO THE WORLD

On campus and beyond its borders, during school hours and on their own time, Penn Charter students find ways to reach out to others, make a difference in the community — and learn from their experiences.

The school's commitment to service reaches back to its roots. Penn Charter's founder, William Penn, embraced the call to serve others as a basic tenet of his Quaker faith. Penn and the early Quakers sought to "mend this world" through service to the poor, the mentally ill — all those with struggles in life.



At the Sedgwick Theater, a Germantown Avenue landmark in use as a warehouse for a social services agency, a Penn Charter crew helped clean and inventory donations.

Penn Charter students continue to serve those in need. Some endeavors such as the holiday food and gift drives and the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service are long-standing traditions. Students also are quick to respond to a crisis, as they did in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The school's service van is on the road nearly every day of the week, transporting students to off-campus projects.

"Everyone does service. It is hugely important at our school, and students take it very seriously," said Casey Sharbaugh, Class of 2007.

Penn Charter's extensive service learning program, meanwhile, involves children in all grades in age-appropriate service activities that also serve curricular goals. The school draws a distinction between community service and service learning, even though community service can offer many a teaching moment.

"Community service is something you do with a sense of good will. Service learning represents an engagement in social issues with an educational component," says Thomas R. Rickards, chair of the Religious Studies Department.

An array of courses in all grades incorporate service learning — even in kindergarten, where children grow worms (!!) as a fund-raising activity and at the same time learn about science and taking responsibility. Students also gain perspective by virtue of their repeated encounters over the years with students of nearby schools and residents of several nearby facilities.

"For some kids, it opens up a new world. These kids have gone places, seen other people's lives, and they become sensitive to the issues that other people face," Rickards said.

A group of students are gathered in a large, ornate hall with a highly decorative, octagonal ceiling featuring intricate golden patterns and a central light fixture. The students, dressed in casual attire like hoodies and sweatshirts, are standing in a loose circle, looking towards the center. The background shows a large, open space with various items and vehicles, suggesting a workshop or a community center.

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## **Service learning at Penn Charter...**

- ... combines learning objectives with service objectives
- ... links to academic content
- ... engages students in meeting community needs
- ... benefits both the community and the student who does the service
- ... involves reflection and learning on the part of the student

## SERVICE LEARNING IMBEDDED IN CURRICULUM

All students in the seventh and 10th grades take a service learning course. In the Upper School, service learning is imbedded into the core curriculum and key to electives such as Issues in Urban Studies or Issues in Physical Disability; in 12th grade, students can incorporate a service activity in their Senior Comprehensive Projects. For example, one senior worked with students at Widener Memorial School for the physically and mentally challenged, another worked with Urban Promise, a ministry serving youth in Camden, and another with Family Support Services; two of the students produced research papers and the third a film.

In service learning courses, students study relevant social and political issues, take tests, keep journals or do a research paper. "Academics are not diminished at all," said James Ballengee, director of service learning at Penn Charter.

For instance, students in the Issues in Urban Studies tutor children at a nearby public school and also learn about the complex issues facing major cities, including quality education, race, homelessness and poverty. "We would learn about an issue and then go out to a school and see kids in a real-life situation," Sharbaugh said. "It was so authentic."

Many students do both — enroll in service learning courses and volunteer for community service. "Participation in the after-school and weekend projects is greater than ever," Ballengee said. "The one program augments the other."



Third grade students learned to knit, then put their fingers to work creating scarves for children in need.

"Last year I knit scarves for the homeless. I knit seven scarves...knowing someone needed them made me work hard."

— Isabel Hirshberg, Class of 2015

“Doing service at the Widener School over the years opened my eyes to the idea of physical therapy as a career. Being able to work with children is very important to me.”

— Lara Appelbaum OPC '06

### STRONG TIES AND ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS

Penn Charter has strong ties for both service learning and community service with the Widener, Lingelbach and Taylor public schools and with Ohana House for the elderly, Kensington Community Center, Iris House for the mentally ill and the Hassel Residence for the geriatric mentally ill. Working with the Northwest Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network, students move homeless individuals and families to shelters, and they contribute gifts and food to those individuals at the holidays.

Lower and Middle School students have many opportunities to experience ongoing, face-to-face, caring relationships, including visiting the Stapeley Hall home for the elderly, bagging food for needy families, and working with children with disabilities. “It’s not just a drop-in, feel-good kind of program,” said Ballengee.

Service opportunities engage students in the community as tutors, as kitchen staff, or sometimes as friends who share stories.





Students pulled weeds and invasive plants on the grounds of Historic RittenhouseTown in Fairmount Park.

### Facts:

- ☞ More than a dozen courses, K-12, incorporate service learning.
- ☞ Service learning courses are taught to the whole seventh grade and the entire 10th grade.
- ☞ More than 40 percent of the school community (students, teachers, parents and staff) comes out for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service every January.
- ☞ Days of Service in both the Middle and Upper Schools involve every student and teacher in those divisions.
- ☞ More than 90 percent of Upper School students volunteer service hours in after-school and weekend programs.

## GIVING AND GETTING BACK

In undertaking service projects, students build such character traits as compassion, responsibility and selflessness. Recounting their experiences, students say participation in service at Penn Charter has enriched their lives and influenced their decisions about college and career.

“These programs give our students the opportunity for personal experience with others — and personal service is the foundation upon which Quakerism is built,” Ballengee said.

Earl J. Ball, head of school from 1976 to 2007, said the service learning program combined with community service activities enrich the Penn Charter experience. “Service at Penn Charter speaks to one of the core values of the school’s mission and is central to what we do,” Ball says.

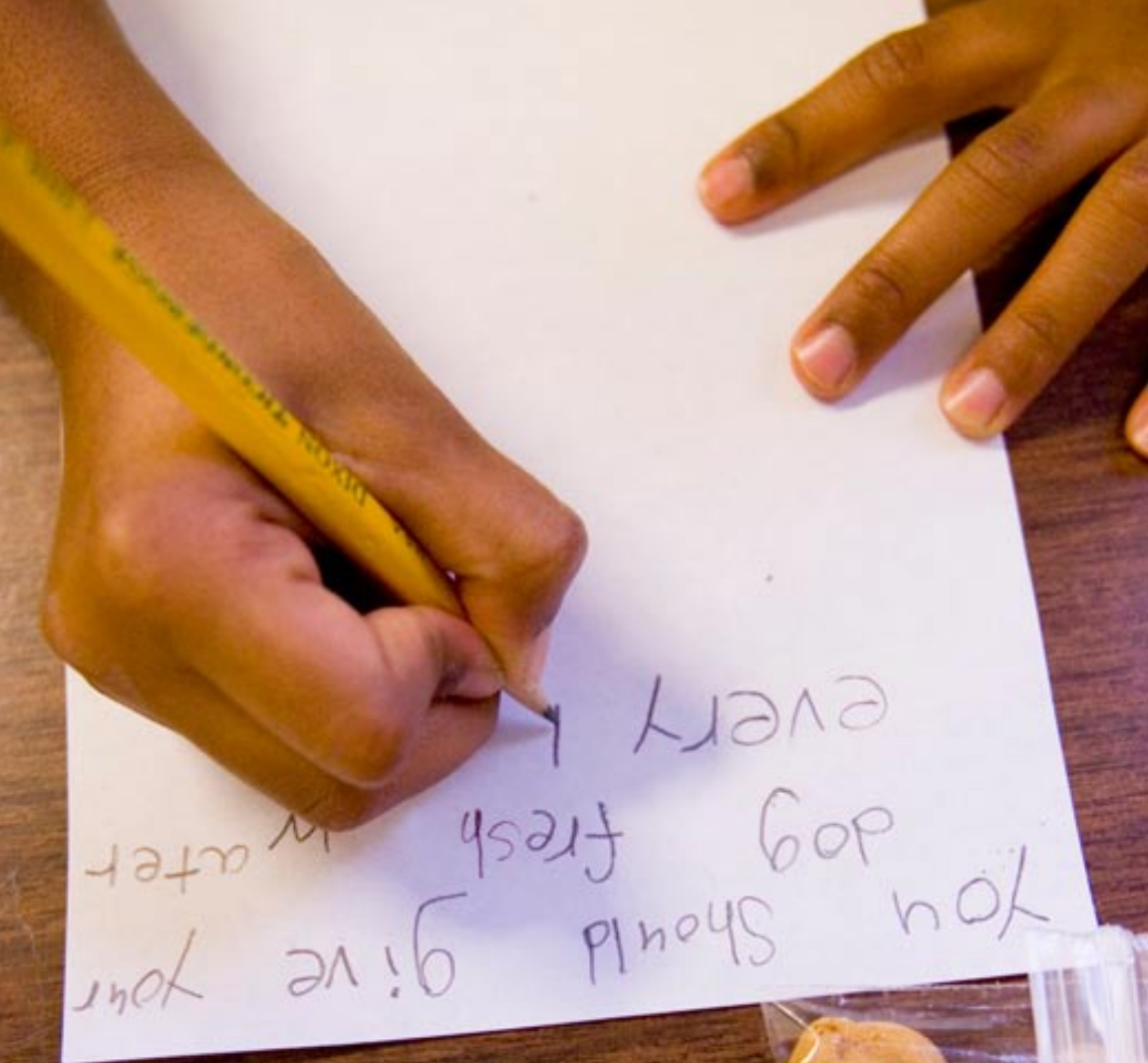


Service opportunities involve students and elders in games and hobbies, or in efforts to revitalize urban neighborhoods.

“Service extends our children in ways that the curriculum cannot. It brings out the very best in our students and challenges them to see that of God in everyone they encounter.”

— Darryl J. Ford  
Head of School, July 2007





## Mission Statement

Quaker principles and practice guide Penn Charter, a Friends school by birthright and conviction. Within a diverse community we engage students in a stimulating and rigorous educational program. We foster academic discipline, intellectual curiosity, and spiritual growth to prepare our graduates for higher education and for life. We develop students to act in a moral, civil, and responsible manner.





Fund-raising projects are a favorite in the Lower School, including one endeavor in which first graders bagged and sold doggie treats and pet care tips. Proceeds benefited local animal shelters.

## Lower School

- 🐾 Fund-raising (K-5)
- 🐾 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service (K-5)
- 🐾 Grade partners (K-5 and 7th)
- 🐾 Worm project (K)
- 🐾 Thanksgiving food drive (1st)
- 🐾 Food drive for St. Peters (2nd)
- 🐾 Scarf-knitting project (3rd)
- 🐾 Trick or Treat for UNICEF (4th)
- 🐾 Project Share (4th)
- 🐾 Partnering with Widener School (4th and 5th)
- 🐾 Book drive (K-5, organized by 5th)

“If I have something to give and people have a need, you can put two and two together; it’s as easy as math.”

— Joya Ahmad, Class of 2011



As part of their work in QUADS, seventh graders create posters exploring the values and accomplishments of Quaker historical figures.

## Middle School

- ☞ QUADS (Quakerism, Art, Design and Service Learning) provides seventh grade students with an understanding of Quaker beliefs and values, including the core value of service to others. As a creative project, students participate in Art Partners with elderly residents of Stapeley Hall and work in Lower School classrooms.
- ☞ Friday afternoon service at Hassel House and Wissahickon Charter School
- ☞ Empty Bowl project
- ☞ Fund-raising events (AIDS walk, cross-country 8-mile run; bake and pretzel and sales; dress-down days)
- ☞ Ongoing Service Projects (Aid for Friends meals for shut-ins; McMichael Park cleanup; Cloverly Park cleanup, Fairhill Burial Ground cleanup)
- ☞ Canned-food drive
- ☞ Toys for Tots gift drive
- ☞ Holiday gift drive for Taylor School families
- ☞ Fund-raising for targeted projects (solar ovens for Africa; Katrina and Tsunami relief; National Adoption Center)
- ☞ Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service (cooking for shelters)
- ☞ Middle School Day of Service sends more than 200 students and teachers into the community to visit the elderly and children in need, to assemble and distribute food and toiletry supplies, to cleanup local parks.

“Our schools are in the same neighborhood and less than a mile apart. It’s great for our students to see such diversity in proximity. We’re all here, we’re all here together and together we can make a difference.”

— Kellie Gilroy, service learning coordinator  
at Wissahickon Charter School.

## History

Early leaders of the school set an example for students by actively engaging in reform organizations. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Overseers of the school were involved in Quaker reform organizations, including the Friends’ Asylum for the Insane and the Friendly Association for Indian Relief. They also were active in secular reform efforts, including the Philadelphia Association for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, Pennsylvania Hospital and the Philadelphia Association for the Instruction of Poor Children.





## Upper School

- ☞ Service Council — 25 students who coordinate service projects in the Upper School.
- ☞ Quaker Principles and Practice course (10th grade) includes a biweekly service project and requires students to reflect on how Quaker beliefs are translated into a pursuit of social change.
- ☞ Service-learning elective courses encourage students to learn about themselves, career opportunities and a particular area of service to others by working each week at a local service agency.
- ☞ Senior Comprehensive Project may include a service component.
- ☞ Community Service — 40-hour commitment satisfies one of the two activity requirements that Upper School students must meet each year.
- ☞ Louis T. Savino Day of Service — Renamed to honor a classmate who died in 2000, the Upper School Day of Service sends about 400 students into the community for one school day in October to paint; plant trees; clean parks, trails and play areas; pack clothing and books; and serve meals in soup kitchens.

At Whosoever Gospel Mission in Germantown, students and teachers worked to clear away debris from a fire that destroyed the mission last spring.

“My favorite thing is our project helping homeless families with moving. I don’t do it for myself—these families don’t have it easy—but I feel better for doing it.”

— Kelvin Johnson, Class of 2007

Each year, students, faculty and administrators create ceramic bowls for the Empty Bowl Project, a pottery fund-raiser to support Northwest Interfaith Hospitality Network.



## Resources

Service learning is an education trend that has gained wide acceptance in recent years, especially at the college and secondary school levels.

To learn more, visit the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse at [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org).

For more information about Penn Charter's programs, contact:  
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“True Godliness does not  
turn men out of the world,  
but enables Them to live  
better in it, and excites  
their endeavors to mend it.”

— William Penn, 1644-1718