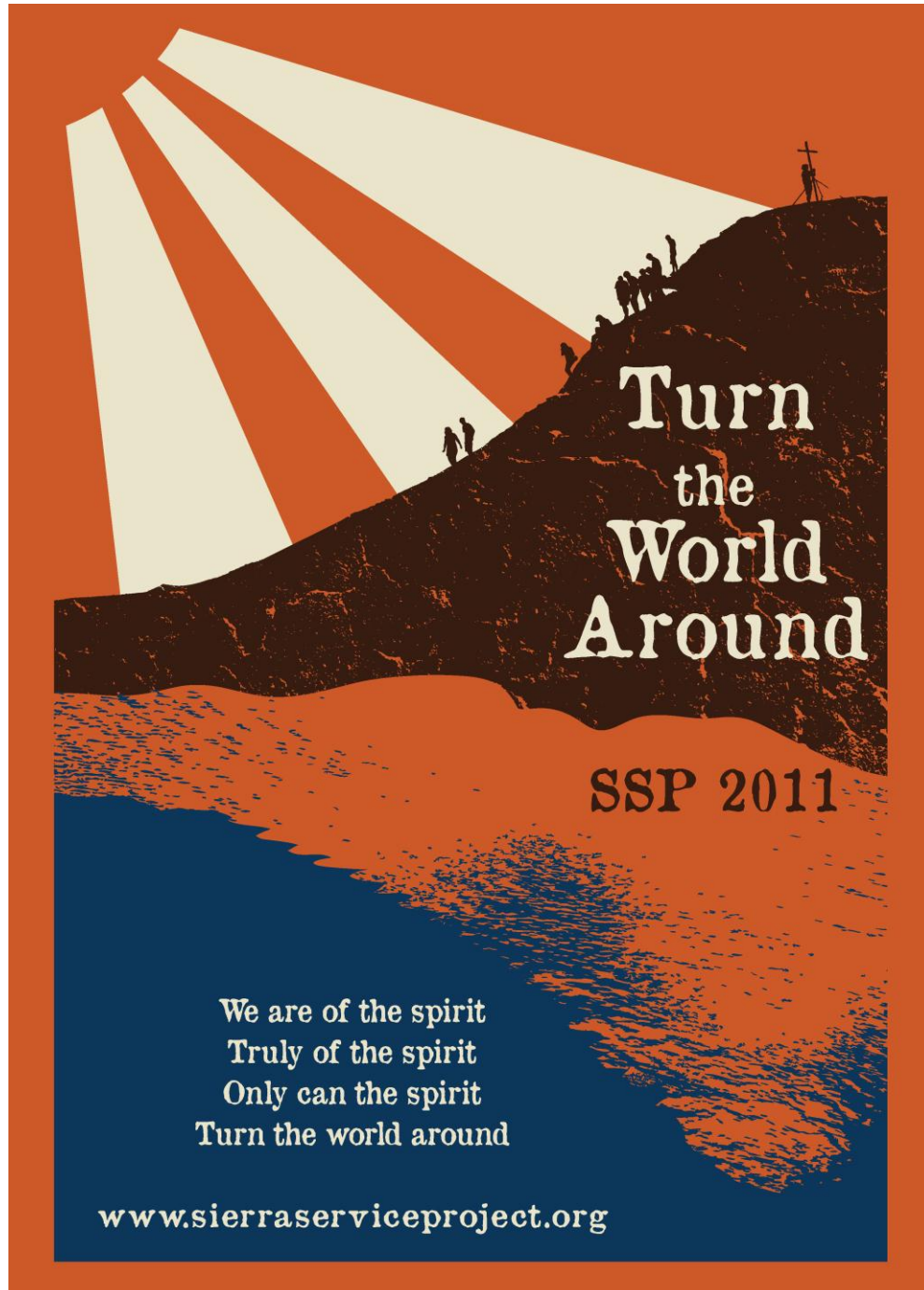


Sierra Service Project



2011 Annual Report

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INTRODUCTION

October 13, 2011

Dear Friend and Supporter of Sierra Service Project,

Thank you for taking the time to review SSP's Annual Report. This has been a very busy and rewarding year for us.

Programmatically, the year began with two winter break sessions in South LA, which were almost immediately followed by the piloting of our new Weekend of Service program in Sacramento. We successfully piloted three rainy weekends for 99 participants – and will continue this program in 2012.

After a busy period of running alternative spring break programs in South LA, we hired the summer staff and made final site preparations. The summer proved to be one of the smoothest in memory, which I attribute to three things: maturity of our staff, the investments that we have made for the past several years in staff training, and the support provided to summer operations by the headquarters team in Carmichael.

Throughout the year, the Board of Directors has remained very active. We are all particularly excited about the establishment of a SSP Endowment and the launch our endowment campaign. I believe that the groundwork has been laid for a successful campaign and for the creation of a significant endowment.

Of course, all of this is due to the amazing energy of the "SSP Community" – youth, parents, grandparents, church leaders, staff and former staff members, board members, donors and more. You are the people who make this organization thrive and excel!

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

Rick Eaton, Executive Director

Domestic Programs

Winter and Spring Breaks in South Los Angeles

We had a very active alternative winter and spring break season in South Los Angeles this year, hosting both college and combined junior and high school groups. This year's activities were made up of six sessions and 216 volunteers. This component of Sierra Service Project continues to grow and this year accounted for nearly \$60,000 in revenue.

We began the year hosting 25 college students from UC Davis' Newman Center, who gathered in LA the week before Christmas. This is our second year with this lively and engaging group of young Christians. The team began three work projects: a small floor replacement project at MYCLUB, an afterschool program at which we have worked before; a set of stairs at an elderly disabled woman's home; and a very large hay barn at Compton Junior Posse, a youth equestrian program.

Next was a group of 25 junior and senior high school youth from the UCC churches of Arizona and New Mexico. This group took up a four day slot between Christmas and New Year's. They repaired a wheelchair ramp, continued on the hay barn project, and completed two smaller projects at the Vermont Square church. It was a very positive experience for everyone and the UCC leadership was quite impressed with Sierra Service Project.

During the spring, we hosted three different groups with a total of 74 participants. Two were Presbyterian youth groups from Southern California and one was from Christian High School in San Diego. These groups built tack sheds at Compton Junior Posse, built storage cabinets for day laborers at the La Oportunidad Center, and built a wheelchair ramp.

Finally, we hosted a very large youth group from Mountain View Presbyterian Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, during the first week of June. There were 92 participants in this week-long program! The group was amazingly well organized and the result was a very productive and successful week. This group essentially kicked off the LA summer for us, starting a number of projects that continued throughout the summer.

Summer Programs

The summer of 2011 was very successful and smooth. A total of 1,912 people participated in the regular summer sessions which took place at seven different project locations. A brief summary of each site is provided here.

The Navajo Reservation, Teec Nos Pos, Arizona

Sierra Service Project returned to this beautiful community, which sits astride the New Mexico, Colorado and Utah borders in far northeastern Arizona. The community welcomed us back and, with the relationships established in 2010, we found that the work and activities all went very smoothly. The site hosted 289 volunteers, who completed 14 home repair projects.

The Staff:

Site Director: Jennifer Compton

Spiritual Life Coordinator: Evan Griffiths

Construction Coordinators: Eileen Johnson, Lincoln Gill, and Andy Fuesler

Cooks: Allison Kielhold and Kristin Reksc

Susanville Indian Rancheria, Susanville, California

This was our first summer in Susanville, a rural community located in northeastern California. The surroundings were beautiful, there was lots of much-needed work in the community, and our volunteers and staff were warmly welcomed. The site hosted two weeks of junior high program followed by three weeks of high school. The staff consisted of six individuals rather than the normal seven-person team. Because this site's enrollment was below average for much of the summer, the team functioned with only one very hard-working cook for most of the summer. Because of the small staff size, the transition from junior to senior high school was a challenge, but the staff coped with it well. In total, the 248 volunteers who served in Susanville completed 21 repair projects. They also contributed to the building of a tribally-owned campground in the nearby mountains.

The Staff:

Site Director: Robert Frederiksen

Spiritual Life Coordinator: Emily Johnson

Construction Coordinators: Cameron Hansen, Bri Dennison, and Alex Knaak

Cook: Alison Crowley

Shoshone-Bannock Reservation, Fort Hall, Idaho

This was SSP's second summer on the Fort Hall reservation and it was again very successful. A total of 283 volunteers served at this site, including a number of groups from Oregon, Montana, and Colorado. The tribe was once again very accommodating and provided building materials for several of the 32 projects that our volunteers completed. The area is beautiful, and our accommodations at the local high school are more than adequate. Because of the size of the reservation and the fact that we want to have an SSP presence in the Northwest, we anticipate continuing to work here for many years.

The Staff:

Site Director: Martin Popish
Spiritual Life Coordinator: Kelley Collins
Home Repair Coordinator: Camille Pegg
Supply Coordinators: Nathaniel Dueber and Nicole VanDewerker
Cooks: Peter Mounq and Hilary Smith

Chukchansi Tribe, Coarsegold, California

We had a great first-year experience on the Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Tribe. We worked very closely with the Chukchansi Indian Housing Authority, who were always available to us and very helpful. The Housing Authority arranged for our entire operation to be located in a house on a large, rural lot. It worked surprisingly well, and was self-contained with port-a-potties and outdoor showers. Youth and adults slept in a large garage and outside. This site hosted 307 volunteers and was split between the three weeks of junior high and three weeks of senior high programs. The teams completed 19 repair projects over the course of the summer.

The Staff:

Site Director: Breea Laugalis
Spiritual Life Coordinator: Rachel Mellby
Home Repair Coordinator: Brandon Leppla
Supply Coordinators: Grace Whitmore and Matthew Izzo
Cooks: Cassandra Bath and Dylan Ackerman

Table Bluff Rancheria, Loleta, California

Once again, the Loleta Elementary School was our home for the summer. We had planned to work primarily on the Bear River Rancheria, but personnel changes at the tribe changed that plan. Instead, we worked entirely with the Wiyot Tribe. We completed 16 home repair projects on both the old and new reservations, as well as spending time on the Tribe's Indian Island restoration project. This site operated for only four weeks and hosted 167 volunteers.

The Staff:

Site Director: Amanda Considine
Spiritual Life Coordinator: Courtney Ridgely
Construction Coordinators: Alex Hernandez and Kelsi Russell
Cook: Veronica Russell

Yurok Reservation, Wautec, California

SSP spent the summer on the up-river portion of the Yurok Reservation. Our main contacts were the two local tribal council members. Our original plans were to stay at the Weitchpec Elementary School, but remodeling work being done at that site forced us to do a last-minute relocation of our base to the Wautec fire house, which was the facility that we used in 2007 when we last worked in the area. This was a very remote, isolated, and difficult site. Fortunately, our staff worked extremely hard and the volunteers showed great flexibility with sleeping outdoors, long and winding roads, port-a-potties, and outdoor showers. The very beautiful setting and warm relationships with the local people more than made up for the physical hardships.

The 355 volunteers who served in Wautec completed 22 projects, including the building of a smoke house and several wood sheds.

The Staff:

Site Director: Gus Pohl

Spiritual Life Coordinator: Moe Leneweaver

Construction Coordinators: Katie Keema, Pascal Domicone, and Andrew Taylor

Cooks: David Purcell and Wendy Gorman

South Los Angeles, California

Our South LA site was once again located at the Vermont Square United Methodist Church, which continues to be a good project location for us. We hosted 279 volunteers who completed 14 work projects. The "non work" activities at this site continue to play a very important role, with groups spending one day learning about the City of Los Angeles, visiting the L.A. River, taking public busses through downtown, and having other interesting learning experiences. This team, which consisted of only six individuals, encountered some challenges because of this.

The Staff:

Site Director: Terry Miller

Spiritual Life Coordinator: Jennifer Kent

Construction Coordinators: Daniel Adams and Carolyn Bickel

Cooks: Jeffrey Painter and Kelly Kerekes

A Note about the Junior High Program

SSP's junior high program was established in 2008 and is now an integral part of our summer operations. This summer, five weeks of junior high sessions were split across two different sites. This allowed churches to have some geographic choice. It also exposed two of our staff teams to the junior high experience, but added complexity and a few challenges to their summer. We continue to receive very positive feedback from junior high participants and their adult leaders about the program.

Summary of Domestic Site Repair Project Activities

Site	Volunteers	Projects Completed	Material Costs	Cost/Person/Day
South Los Angeles, CA	370 (including zero week)	23	\$11,220	\$7.58
Fort Hall, ID	280	32	\$9,182	\$7.29
Coarsegold, CA	302	19	\$8,931	\$7.12
Wautec, CA	354	22	\$10,893	\$6.88
Teec Nos Pos, AZ	289	14	\$8,376	\$6.44
Loleta, CA	166	16	\$4,214	\$5.64
Susanville, CA	243	21	\$5,085	\$5.07
Total	2004 (1,912 w/o zero week)	147 (138 w/o zero week)	\$57,901	\$6.70

Weekend of Service

The Sacramento Weekend of Service program was conceived as a way to get young people involved in shorter service experiences throughout the year. With a start-up grant of \$5,000 from the Kelly Foundation, this program was successfully piloted in January and February, 2011.

Three weekend sessions were held. Each session ran from 6 PM on Friday evening until 3 PM on Sunday afternoon and was held at the Oak Park United Methodist Church in Sacramento's Oak Park neighborhood. Volunteers slept in the Fellowship Hall. Meals were prepared in the church's kitchen.

A total of 99 individuals participated in the three weekends. While most participants were from the greater Sacramento area, one group drove from Northridge in Southern California and another came from San Luis Obispo, CA.

The weekends were staffed primarily by the SSP headquarters staff members, who planned the activities, prepared the projects and ran the actual activities. They were assisted by several former summer staffers.



Work Projects

Volunteers completed four different projects:

1. At Yes2Kollege, an Oak Park based college preparedness program, teams spent three weekends working on the small organization's office. They installed a subfloor, put up drywall, and painted. They also installed drainage to divert water away from the building.
2. WEAVE, Inc. (Women Escaping a Violent Environment) requested that we remodel the lobby, waiting room and hallways of their Midtown office and counseling center. Our volunteers demolished two small walls and removed old flooring before painting and installing new flooring.



3. We rehabbed a room at the Aspire Alexander Twilight College Preparatory Academy, a Sacramento charter school. The work involved doing drywall, flooring, insulating and painting.
4. Finally, with Ubuntu Green, volunteers spent one weekend building raised garden beds in South Sacramento. Ubuntu Green is a local healthy foods nonprofit organization. The photo to the right shows youth assembling a garden bed.



The organizations we partnered with were very happy with the results of this work.

Problems Encountered

No major problems were encountered during the pilot weekends. Our biggest challenge was managing the work projects in the face of cold and rainy weather. This underscores the importance of selecting appropriate and mostly indoor work projects.

We also learned that some improvements are urgently needed to the Oak Park church facility, including repairs to the roof of the Fellowship Hall and replacement of a very old and potentially dangerous stove. We intend to make these improvements in conjunction with next year's program.

Reaction to the Program by Participants

All of the participants were surveyed following their weekend. We received very positive feedback on the program. The general reactions were:

1. Leaders thought it was a safe and well-run experience.
2. Participants were grateful to have a close-to-home service experience.
3. Volunteers felt very good about the work they were able to accomplish.
4. Participants felt that they learned many things about Sacramento and about Oak Park.

Plans for the Future

The Weekend of Service program will restart in the fall of 2011. We have scheduled six weekends in Sacramento in November, January and February. We will also run one pilot weekend in Portland, Oregon. A part-time director will be hired to run the Sacramento programs.

The Summer Staff

In total, SSP employed 45 individuals in its summer operations this year. We once again had a strong pool of applicants to choose from and, on average, this year's staff was nearly one year older than last year's. Our staff continues to be SSP's single most important asset and receives the strongest positive feedback on our weekly evaluations (see pages 16 & 17).

Staff Training

Staff training continues to evolve. This year, we added a 4-day intensive cook training module. This ran at the same time as the similar construction training session. Both of these activities took place at St. Mark's United Methodist Church. Nearly all staff members were able to attend these sessions. In addition, we again held a one day spiritual retreat for spiritual life coordinators. All site directors also participated in a one-day "how to lead and manage at SSP" seminar.

End of Summer Staff Debrief

The traditional end-of-summer staff gathering was held at the Point Pleasant United Methodist Church, located in rural southwestern Sacramento County. As always, this was an active and joyful gathering which yielded a great deal of very good feedback on the summer. Some of the key staff recommendations for next year were to consolidate the two summer staff training sessions into one longer session, to continue the online "pre-training activities," and to continue to evolve the site management tools to be easier to use and more effective.

Spiritual Programming

For the summer's theme, we chose the phrase "Turn the World Around" to capture the transformative nature of the SSP experience. In addition to the visible physical transformation that occurs, for example, to a house when it is painted, this also refers to the internal transformation that takes place in the lives of youth, adult leaders, and community members. Many teams incorporated the well-known Harry Belafonte song by the same name into their programs.

Counselor Training

For the third year we offered two options for counselor training: our traditional regional counselor training sessions led by experienced counselors and SSP board members; and a web-based, multimedia counselor training module. The web option is growing in popularity relative to the in-person training sessions. As this trend continues, we will consider discontinuing the in-person training option.

International Activities

Honduras Homebuilding Projects

SSP sent three teams of high school youth and college young adults to Honduras this summer. A total of 38 individuals participated on these teams. Our efforts in Honduras were once again led by Laura Rambikur and Luis Rios. They were assisted by two local Honduran translators.

The first team, led by Rev. Brian Schlemmer from Tucson, Arizona, worked in Tegucigalpa. The second team, led by Christy Hochhalter from Trinity United Methodist Church in Cary, North Carolina, was composed of young adults from North Carolina and Arizona. This team served in the rural hamlet of Potrerillos, located outside of the city of Siguatepeque, about 4 hours north of Tegucigalpa. This was our first time in the community. The living quarters – the unoccupied local Methodist parsonage – were cramped, but the overall experience was outstanding. Finally, the third team, composed of youth from Fuqua Varina, North Carolina, worked in Danli and La Jagua. Each team built two houses.

As always, the feedback we receive about this project from participants and community members is very, very positive. Unfortunately, this year's program costs significantly exceeded income due to unexpectedly high transportation costs, extra local labor due to weather, and the loss of a grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief. We will be increasing this program's fees in 2012.

Guatemala Study and Serve Pilot Project

For the first time in its history, SSP sent a team of 11 young people to serve and learn in Guatemala. This project was unique in its location and also in its format: participants spent 10 days in Guatemala and, during that time, they travelled to three different communities, where they lived and worked on local community improvement projects.

Laura Rambikur, who has worked for SSP in Honduras for five summers, co-led the project. Her partner in this adventure was a professional Guatemalan tour leader, Ruth Garrido. Ruth has 10 years of experience leading young adult and church study groups in Guatemala; she and Laura made a wonderful team!

Participant feedback on this project was very positive and we intend to schedule another session in 2012. The focus of this program will continue to be on learning about social and economic conditions in Guatemala by visiting and working on small projects in several different communities.

Headquarters Staff

Caitlin Hamilton joined the headquarters team this year as an intern. She devoted herself to revamping our food program and assisted in the development of our online food tracking program. The intern position has been established as a one-year opportunity and will be filled by another individual starting October 1.

Meghan Osborn continues to manage SSP's business operations and serves as our registrar. She handles most of the communication with church group leaders.

Megan Taylor serves as Program Associate and takes on a wide variety of assignments. While her main focus remains our construction program, she is also our website manager and shared in the supervision of the summer operations.

Rick Eaton just completed his 10th year as SSP's Executive Director. In addition to his executive responsibility, Rick supervises the summer activities, has led weekend, winter and spring break sessions, and coordinates all of SSP's grant writing and fundraising activities.

Enrollment

Total enrollment in all of SSP's programs, including winter and spring break programs, Weekend of Service and our Central America sessions, continues to grow. However, summer program enrollment this year was 1,912 compared to last year's higher level of 2,071. Whether this represents a trend is impossible to say. This year, about 90 percent of our summer program participants were from United Methodist churches, which is similar to the past.

Sierra Service Project 2011 Attendance Report			
Total Participants			
	Youth	1,516	
	Counselors	396	
	Central America Participants	49	
	Winter & Spring Break Participants	216	
	Weekend of Service	99	
	Total	2,276	
Total Churches			
	Denomination	Churches*	Participants*
	United Methodist	108	1,647
	Episcopal	9	132
	Presbyterian	7	81
	UCC	1	9
	Lutheran	5	43
	Total	130	1,912
By United Methodist Conference			
	California-Nevada	36	563
	California- Pacific	48	770
	Desert Southwest	9	126
	Pacific Northwest	4	40
	Oregon-Idaho	5	64
	Rocky Mountain	3	56
	Other Conferences	2	28
	Total	108	1,647

*Excludes Central America, Weekend of Service, and Winter/Spring Break participants

Quality Assessment

The end-of-week evaluation that is filled out by nearly all participants is one source of valuable information used to assess the program. This is one means to evaluate the effectiveness of our training, procedures, equipment, and staff selection, and to try to assess the impact of areas which were targeted for improvement.

Because of the differences in the programs, the junior and senior high questionnaires are similar but not identical. For this reason, each will be discussed separately here.

Senior High. What we generally see in this data are:

- 1) That the scores are generally quite high (over 4 on a 5 point scale),
- 2) They don't change a lot from year to year, and
- 3) Counselors are more vocal in their criticism than youth.

This year, **food** scores improved somewhat. With the emphasis placed on this area this year, we expected to see some gains. The evaluations contain specific comments about some aspects of the menu which we will attempt to address for next year. The **construction** scores, particularly in the area of tool and supply availability, also improved. We think this is a reflection of the ongoing focus on better training, more support, better procedures, and some investment in tools. These trends are seen particularly in the counselor scores.

Counselor Scores

	Area	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change from 2010
Food	Quantity	4.02	4.14	4.47	4.27	4.49	+0.22
	Balance	3.77	3.69	3.70	3.78	3.90	+0.12
Non-Work Activities	Program	3.97	3.80	4.07	3.91	3.92	+0.01
	Spiritual Awakening	3.86	3.66	3.97	3.86	3.86	-
	Spiritual Content				4.70	4.71	+0.01
Construction	Instructions	3.87	3.75	3.82	3.80	3.94	+0.14
	Supplies and Tools	3.95	3.47	3.71	3.49	3.82	+0.33
	Accomplishments	4.37	4.36	4.33	4.24	4.37	+0.13
Staff	Attitude	4.72	4.73	4.70	4.71	4.81	+0.10
	Organization	4.30	4.22	4.33	4.30	4.35	+0.05
	Responsiveness	4.69	4.77	4.79	4.73	4.88	+0.15

The questions on the character and performance of the staff continue to be the highest scoring items. Our young adult site leadership really is the "secret sauce" that makes SSP what it is. Therefore, our ability to attract, train, mentor, and retain a cohort of mature, committed Christian young people is one of our most critical success factors.

Youth Scores

Youth evaluation scores historically have been higher than counselor scores, and this year is no exception. In 2011, youth scores were flat-to-slightly up compared to 2010, showing less of an improvement than counselor scores.

	Area	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Change from 2010
Food	Quantity	4.08	4.22	4.33	4.22	4.34	+0.12
	Balance	3.88	3.80	3.75	3.88	3.97	+0.09
Non-Work Activities	Program	4.06	3.99	4.15	4.26	4.18	-0.08
	Spiritual Awakening	3.69	3.97	4.01	4.00	3.94	-0.06
	Spiritual Content				4.79	4.76	-0.03
Construction	Instructions	4.31	4.32	4.35	4.36	4.36	-
	Supplies and Tools	4.00	3.86	3.93	3.80	4.00	+0.20
	Accomplishments	4.50	4.56	4.51	4.55	4.58	+0.03
Staff	Attitude	4.79	4.77	4.76	4.84	4.85	+0.01
	Organization	4.46	4.45	4.50	4.50	4.49	-0.01
	Responsiveness	4.72	4.67	4.69	4.73	4.79	+0.06

The Board

2011 Officers

Rev. Melissa Rynders, President
Dennis Sandstrom, Secretary

Mark Rehfield, Vice President
Dennis Pedersen, Treasurer

2011 Committees

Personnel

Mark Rehfield, Chair
Bailee Freeborn*
Deborah Davidson
Rev. Melissa Rynders

Finance

Dennis Pedersen, Chair
Rev. Katie Goetz
Dennis Sandstrom
Rev. Lara Bolger

Fundraising

Joanne Poff, Chair
Nanci Paulson
Sarah Nordwick
Kathy Sanders Platnick

Outreach

Brent Alspach, Chair
Alissa Bertsch Johnson
Jim Jewell
Rev. Jeong Park
Rev. DiAnn Johnson
Lizzie Smith*
Kristen Laughlin*

*Youth Representatives

Fundraising

Despite the recession, the Sierra Service Project received very generous contributions from a number of sources in 2011. Our individual fundraising program was very successful, exceeding our expectations. Similarly, tribal and foundation gifts also exceeded our budget goals this year. The results are shown below

Category	2010	2011
Donations from Individuals	\$29,469	\$46,189
Grants from Foundations and Tribes	\$17,875	\$39,500
Donations from Churches and UM Conferences	\$24,975	\$18,873
Covenant Church Contributions	\$5,884	\$9,222
Donations from Businesses	\$2,765	\$600
Donations from Board Members	\$9,412	\$9,870
Recycling, vehicle auctions, and affinity programs	\$506	\$688
In-Kind donations	\$4,160	\$2,222
Total fundraising	\$95,048	\$127,164

The Next Generation Fund

Sierra Service Project established the Next Generation Fund to help finance new initiatives, such as our Junior High program, additional US domestic sites and our programs in Central America. The current balance of the Next Generation Fund is \$52,565.

In-Kind Donations

We continue to participate in Home Depot's Framing Hope program in which we receive donations of excess stock and returned products from Home Depot. Although we receive a lot of material that we are not able to use, we are able to find "homes" for some of this material with other nonprofits. In total, we estimate that we have received \$7,700 in economic value from this program in 2011. (This value is not currently reflected on the income statement.)

In addition, we have received significant donations of dehydrated potatoes from Nonpareil Potatoes of Blackfoot, ID, and toilet paper from Scott-Naake Paper Company of Sacramento, CA. The value of these donations is reflected in the chart on page 18.

Endowment

The Board of Directors voted this year to establish an endowment and adopted policies governing the use of endowment funds to support scholarships for low-income and minority youth, to support ministry and employment for young adults, and to underwrite the development of new program components. An endowment fund campaign is currently underway.

Financial Statements

SSP's 2011 fiscal year audited financial statements can be found on the IRS Form 990 on our website.