What is Youth Leadership?

TOPIC:
Mission - building

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will brainstorm qualities of a good leader
- Students will identify personal leadership traits

LENGTH:
50 minutes

ENVIRONMENT:
Indoors and/or outdoors, large open area is needed

MATERIALS:
- White Erase Board or chalkboard
- Dry Erase markers or chalk
- Soft ball or balloon
- Clipboards
- Blank Paper
- Pencils
- Markers/crayons

Background:
In this lesson, students explore characteristics and traits that encompass leadership positions. This provides students with an opportunity to discuss potential qualities of leaders and how these are situational. Students participate in a non-competitive *moonball* game to introduce and experience a leadership situation with minimal direction provided by the facilitator. Based on this activity, students process qualities of a good leader. This will lead to discussion of potential leadership roles in service projects.

Activity Outline:
Beforehand:
Find a large open area to have students participate in the *moonball* game.

Moonball:
Students gather for instructions. Take a moment to review objectives of the activity. Explain rules of the game, stress safety and non-competitiveness. The rules are simple. Students should work as a team to keep the ball from coming in contact with the floor. However this is harder than it seems. Encourage participants to plan a strategy. Prompt students as needed to bolster success. Allow students to repeat game as necessary until they're happy with results.

Leadership Qualities:
After the game, team members gather for discussion. Using a chalkboard or white erase board, list traits or characteristics stated by participants that were displayed during the moonball activity. Use this as a jumping off point and prompt students to brainstorm additional leadership qualities. Ask students to share elements of leadership displayed during the activity. What skills were contributed by participants? What actions supported the mission? How did the group adapt the activity during the experience? Is leadership individual or collective? This process will permit students an opportunity to discern characteristics of leadership leading into more meaningful discussion.

Encourage participants to develop a definition of leadership, distinguishing qualities of good leaders. Discussion should also relate to how leadership is situational and that sometimes certain situations work better with particular characteristics of leadership.

Transition the group's discussion toward the environmental service project. Prompt them to process where the project includes leadership needs. What types of leaders are needed? Who wants to consider leadership for various project points? Does the group have

recommendations for leaders? Record these answers for consideration of leadership positions during the project. It may be helpful to return to this discussion during the *Mission Shield* activity.

References:

Peterson, R.S. (1991). Understanding my traits. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota.

Rohnke, K. & Butler, S. (1995). Quicksilver: Adventure games, initiative problems, trust activities and a guide to effective leadership. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.