

CITY YEAR VALUES

City Year's core values represent the deepest beliefs and highest aspirations of our organization. We strive to ensure that these values animate our culture of idealism, inspire our actions, and inform our decisions on a daily basis. They serve as our north star, empowering us to stay true to ourselves through changing times as we strive to achieve our mission.

1. SERVICE TO A CAUSE GREATER THAN SELF

We dedicate ourselves to addressing shared civic challenges through unified action.

City Year believes that service represents a personal decision to dedicate one's time, energy, and effort to a cause greater than oneself and to attend powerfully to the needs of others. Service to a cause greater than self creates common ground by bringing together diverse individuals who share a similar commitment to work for the common good and empowering them to engage in unified action. Seemingly insurmountable problems throughout history have been addressed by individuals who have chosen to serve their fellow citizens, communities and nations in this way. This widespread commitment to serve a cause greater than self has united people across backgrounds, transformed pressing public problems, and developed the civic spirit and leadership potential of every individual who has heeded the call to serve. At City Year, we strive to always ask ourselves, "Is this about me, or is it about the cause?" *Always make it about the cause.* In this way, we unite in a collective effort to demonstrate the power of service as a strategy for generating transformational change.

2. STUDENTS FIRST, COLLABORATION ALWAYS

The success of the young people we serve is our preeminent goal, best achieved by working in partnership with others who are dedicated to the same cause.

The students we serve are our highest priority, and supporting their success is our preeminent goal. For this reason, we are fiercely committed to deploying our resources and energy in a strategic effort to maximize our positive impact on the academic and life success of every student we serve. *Accordingly, other priorities should always yield to the needs of best serving students.* At the same time, we recognize that this goal must be achieved by working in collaboration with others – teachers, administrators, parents, policymakers, community and other non-profit partners – who share our commitment to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to receive a quality education and build skills for academic and life success. Inspired by the African proverb that "It takes a whole village to raise a child," we are committed to putting students first while always operating with a spirit of collaboration and partnership.

3. BELIEF IN THE POWER OF YOUNG PEOPLE

We are committed to harnessing one of the most powerful forces for positive change at work in the world today.

The energy and idealism of young people are, quite simply, among the most powerful and transformative forces at work in the world today. From advancing civil rights in the United States, to helping end apartheid in South Africa, to promoting democracy in the Middle East, examples of transformational change powered by the idealism and hard work of young people abound. At City Year, we are committed to tapping the civic power of young people to achieve transformational change for students and schools in high poverty communities – building students' skills for academic and life success and generating a positive school culture and climate. In the process, we seek to develop a generation of empowered, experienced, and effective idealistic leaders. *Accordingly, we must always seek to release the idealism of young people to tackle seemingly impossible tasks.* Our experience is clear: when given big goals, young people inevitably surpass our highest expectations and achieve extraordinary results.

4. SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

We dedicate ourselves to building a more just, equal, fair, and compassionate world.

Over the course of history, every generation has struggled to ensure that the blessings of liberty, freedom, equality, and justice have been shared with an ever-widening circle of humanity. In the fullness of time, powerless subjects have become democratic citizens possessed of inalienable rights; slaves have become free men and women; voiceless women have become empowered citizens and civic leaders; once oppressed minorities have stepped out of the shadows to stand with dignity and equality in the daylight of empowerment and opportunity. Every generation comes of age at a particular moment in this ongoing struggle, and City Year is dedicated to engaging the young adults of each new generation in a year of citizen service focused on widening the circle of those able to stand in the light of social justice. At City Year, this commitment is primarily focused on promoting educational equality for all – especially for those in the highest poverty communities – so that all students have the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

5. LEVEL FIVE LEADERSHIP

We aspire to develop a culture of Level Five leadership across the organization, fostering a blend of great humility with intense professional will.

The concept of "Level Five Leadership" is borrowed from the book *Good to Great*, written by Jim Collins. The term describes a style of leadership which blends a paradoxical mix of qualities. First, Level Five leaders practice great humility: they are modest, they learn from and listen to others, they give credit to others for success and take personal responsibility when things do not go as planned. At the same time, they operate with intense professional will: they take bold action, set ambitious goals, make courageous decisions, and persevere through the long, challenging process of achieving great things. Humility, will, boldness, courage, and perseverance: these are the qualities of Level Five Leadership, and City Year is committed to operating in this way at all levels of our organization.

6. EMPATHY

We strive to constantly walk in the moccasins of others.

City Year believes that empathy – the ability to emotionally put yourself in the place of the “other” – is an essential skill for anyone committed to social change. We are inspired by the Cherokee prayer that states, “Great Spirit, grant that I may never criticize my brother or my sister until I have walked the trail of life in their moccasins.” Given the complexity of the problems we seek to transform, the diversity of the communities we serve, and the inclusivity of our own corps and staff, a strong capacity for empathy is essential; it empowers us to collaborate effectively in order to maximize our impact. Empathy builds trust, which is essential for our work. Similarly, a deep understanding, developed through empathy, of the people, institutions and communities we seek to serve strengthens program design, implementation and results. At all times, we strive to practice empathy by “walking in the moccasins of others.”

7. INCLUSIVITY

We embrace differences as strengths that magnify our capacity to achieve shared goals.

Inclusivity involves more than the celebration of diversity; it means actively embracing differences as vital assets that enrich our community, catalyze transformation, and strengthen our collective power to make positive change. To be inclusive at City Year is to create the most unified, purposeful force for good from the most diverse membership possible. Inclusivity informs our strategy of engaging young people in service as part of a diverse team, as well as our enduring commitment to engaging partners from across the public, private, and non-profit sectors in a collective effort to address pressing public problems. We aspire to create a unique culture that makes all feel welcome, valued, empowered and engaged.

8. UBUNTU

I am a person through other people; my humanity is tied to yours.

Ubuntu – a term borrowed from the Zulu tribe of South Africa – means “I am a person through other people; my humanity is tied to yours.” The concept expresses an essential spiritual truth about the world: we are all connected to each other through invisible webs of interdependence. We share a common world and a collective destiny, and the struggles of the few affect the many. In a very real sense, there is no “us” and “them”...there is only “us”. Because of this profound interdependence, we deepen our own humanity when we strengthen our capacity to recognize and honor the humanity of others. Ubuntu informs our commitment to treating everyone we encounter with deep respect, and to acting from the belief that supporting the success and empowerment of others supports our own success and empowerment. Ubuntu is a way of being and a quality of presence that we aspire to bring to all our relationships.

9. TEAMWORK

We strive to work powerfully together in a unified effort to achieve our goals.

City Year believes in the power of teams. When diverse individuals unite, collaborate, and dream together in pursuit of a shared vision, the team becomes more powerful than the sum of its individual parts. We are inspired by anthropologist Margaret Mead's provocative insight about the power of small groups with a purpose. She said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." That's why City Year has made teamwork essential to everything we do. From corps members who serve daily on inclusive teams to support student success to senior leaders who work collaboratively to advance our organizational goals and mission, everyone at City Year operates as part of team. Teamwork maximizes impact and engenders respect, empathy, understanding, communication, insight, patience, creativity, and joy. For this reason, we have made teamwork central to all that we do.

10. EXCELLENCE

We hold ourselves to the highest standards as we strive to execute our mission and steward our resources.

City Year recognizes that our ambitious goals for transformational change can only be realized through disciplined, rigorous, tireless attention to detail. Excellence is both an inspiring vision and a daily practice; it informs the aspirational nature of the goals we set for ourselves, as well as the discipline, attention, and focus we bring to every activity that must be completed on the way to achieving those goals. It also informs the care, professionalism, and sense of responsibility we bring to being stewards of the resources – human, financial, and material – entrusted to our organization. Because we recognize that even the smallest details contribute to our grandest of outcomes, we aspire to excellence in the execution of our mission and the stewardship of our resources.