

# *The Student Campaign for Child Survival* **Guide to Starting Your Own Campus Chapter, 2006 Edition**

## Initial Steps

### *Be Committed*

Starting your own chapter will be a difficult process but whatever happens, you can be sure that your efforts will grow as you involve more people and you will make an impact on others. Be prepared and be determined. Pump yourself up and feel passionately about the issues. Develop a plan for difficulties you will certainly encounter and commit yourself to success. There is so much your group will grow to be able to do, but everything is accomplished through small steps.

### *Find a Small Group of Passionate Students*

Brainstorm through people you know and ask them to see if they are interested in helping you. You could even make brief presentations at the meeting of other organizations, like Amnesty, and invite people who may be interested to join you. Having even one or two other students to help organize the chapter will make a tremendous difference. Get to know each other well and help inspire one another. Work together and distribute responsibilities for building the chapter.

### *Find a Faculty Advisor*

Having a faculty member to support and advise you can be extremely helpful or even necessary for some schools. Find someone that you like and who you will feel comfortable going to. Explain to him/her what SCCS does and why you are interested in starting your own chapter. Use your own excitement to persuade him/her to help you. He/she may not even have to understand or know about child survival issues. In fact, it would be better to choose someone who already has experience advising student groups so that he/she can offer you the appropriate advice and help guide you through the process.

### *Register the Organization*

The process of registering a student organization is different for every college. Nevertheless, it will not be difficult to find out how. Search the school website using terms like “starting a student group” or go to the student activities center and ask. Once the steps are clear, outline a clear plan and set up a definite timeline for completing the entire process.

## Preparing Your First Meeting

### *Set Up the Time and Place*

Choose a convenient time and place. Most schools will require groups to reserve the room ahead of time. Plan the meeting to last about an hour. It is always a good idea to have some snacks and refreshments during the meeting for everyone to enjoy.

### *Advertise the Meeting*

Child survival certainly transcends political and religious differences; therefore many students on campus will be interested in the campaign when they hear about it. Therefore, successful advertising will lead to a large attendance. Here are some ways you can advertise:

- **Personal:** Personally talk to people whenever you have the chance. When your friends ask why you've been so busy recently, take the time to explain SCCS to them. This is by far the most effective way.
- **Flyers:** Post flyers that specify the exact time and location of the meeting on bulletins across campus. Put them up according to the rules of the school but make sure you blanket the campus.

- **Class Announcements:** Make an announcement at the end of related classes (i.e. Economics of Development) that may have interested students in it. You do not have to be a student of the class but make sure that you ask the professor for permission ahead of time.
- **Mass Email:** Prepare a blurb about the meeting and send it to students in charge of large email lists that pertain to student activities or community service. Ask that the details of your meeting be forwarded to the entire email lists or be included in the next newsletter.
- **Tabling:** Put up a table at a high-traffic, convenient location. Prepare a large poster advertising SCCS to attract people's attention. Have lots of material about the group and about child survival that you can liberally hand out. Prepare a twenty-second explanation that will inspire people to come to the meeting.
- **Quarter Sheets:** These are good to slip under dorm room doors and to pass out personally in high traffic areas. Some groups find this easier than tabling since the message can be dispersed to many people in a much shorter time than tabling requires.

### Running the First Meeting

#### *Introductions*

Spend some time to allow people to introduce themselves and to explain why they are interested in child survival issues. Break the ice! Really take the effort to remember as many names as you can and write them down if that helps.

#### *Explain SCCS*

Introduce SCCS and explain why child survival is an important issue that needs attention. Specific statistics or facts will not communicate as well as your personal level of passion and commitment. Convince people that they will be able to make a difference and that they are part of something great and inspiring. Make clear that even though the group is a chapter of SCCS, the members of the chapter must decide together the purpose and the meaning of the chapter. The national campaign structure exists to support and guide each chapter, not to define them.

You may therefore wish to allocate some time for the group to discuss a more specific platform it wants to adopt. Allow students to ask questions and promote discussion by asking questions yourself. This can take a lot of time so you may have to come back to the issue in the next meeting. The online sample PowerPoint presentation will help you discuss SCCS.

#### *Plan out Action*

Go into your meeting with an explanation of the role the SCCS will play on your campus. Have a list of workable actions that your group can begin right away. Consult our Action Calendar at (the current address of our action calendar). Ask students attending the meeting what type of specific action they would be interested in and plan out the appropriate plans to accomplish it. Possible actions include:

- Planning a speaker on your campus about child survival or humanitarian assistance
- Writing an op-ed for the school paper
- Getting your congressmen to become a leader on child survival issues
- Writing letters to Congressmen about the issue and setting up tables to encourage other students to do it too
- Doing research on the political views and stances of your Congressmen
- Adopting a project in a developing country and planning ways for fundraising

Every person should take part in determining the next step the group takes. If people feel involved in deciding the future course of action, they will participate more enthusiastically. Form committees for specific tasks. They could be in charge of doing the preliminary work for the meeting, setting up the agenda, or executing specific actions that the group has agreed to do. It is essential for everyone to have

ownership of the group and its activities. Set out the date for the next meeting and finish by thanking everyone for participating.

Everyone should leave the first meeting with a good understanding of what the group's purpose is, how they will fit into the group, and what plan of action the group has adopted.

### *Evaluation*

Congratulate yourself for organizing the meeting. It is certainly no easy task. With your core group of members, discuss what went well and what did not. Make sure your next meeting is even better. Send out a group email summarizing what happened and what course of action people have agreed to follow.

## Meeting Management

### *Be Organized*

Start the meeting on time, end on time, and avoid meetings that last for more than one hour. Make sure you always meet at the same time and at the same place. Have a regular cycle (i.e. every Tuesday night at 9:00 PM) so that members will build that time into their schedules but never meet for the sake of meeting. Always have a clear and specific agenda.

All meetings should aim to follow a consistent structure. For example, start the meeting with an update of recent child health related news and end with an inspirational quotation. It is important to be flexible with the content of the meeting but a defined structure will make the meeting more effective and allow members to know what to expect. Prepare a sign-up sheet for everyone to sign in on and have someone keep the minutes during the meeting if important decisions or assignments are made.

### *Involve Everyone*

Never let yourself or anyone else dominate the meeting. The group is about every member and participation will be key for people to develop ownership of the group. Encourage group discussion and make sure important issues and plans are adopted and agreed upon by the entire group. People will only work at what they feel they have personally planned and committed to.

When the group needs to make a decision, voting can be a quick and effective way of deciding issues. Allowing unlimited discussion can be extremely unproductive and a waste of time for those that may not care about the particular issue. Spend proportionally more time for more important decisions but always move on enough time has been spent. Have a quick vote so that people will see others' views and only dwell on the issue more if the group is clearly divided.

### *Remember to Have Fun*

SCCS is not just a social group but the meetings should be generally lighthearted. People should always look forward to attending the meeting not because they are committed to it but because they can look forward to fun and excitement. Don't forget your sense of humor and always aim to have some food, drinks, or candy.

## Effective Organizing

### *Be Personal*

Personal relationships are at the heart of organizing so take time to get to know each other. This does not have to be done during the meeting. Stay later to talk to people and stop to talk to members whenever you see them on campus. Set up dinners with members that you would like to know better and have weekly dinners for the group's leaders or other members who wishes to join. Whenever a new person comes to a meeting, make sure you spend time with them afterwards to explain the group and

what it has been doing. The strength of the group is ultimately dependent on the level of passion and the relationships between its members.

### *Be Active*

The campaign is ultimately about action. There must always be at least one active project the group is working on and every member must have at least one responsibility. Set up specific goals for these projects with specific deadlines. Have a definite strategy and a concrete plan of action that everyone agrees to. This should involve a lot of brainstorming and creative ideas. Make sure these goals are achievable and that progress is measurable.

If a goal is too distant or requires large amounts of work, set up intermediate goals that can be accomplished more easily. Without a specific objective, people easily lose motivation so make use of everyone in the group. You will be unable to attract new members if you do not even use the members you have effectively.

At the same time, it is important not to overwhelm the group with too many goals. The group should be focused and tasks should be complementary rather than diverse or unrelated. Make sure people are doing just enough to stay interested but not too much to be discouraged. It is therefore very important for the group to decide together what projects to tackle so that everyone feels responsible and committed.

Use verbal praise or recognition once specific individuals or the group as a whole has accomplished something significant. Celebrate by having a meeting with lots of food or by sending a congratulatory group email.

### *Delegate Responsibility*

Everyone should know exactly what he or she is responsible for all the time. Give everyone a specific task to do and make sure he or she knows how his or her work is meaningful. Different people should take on different tasks depending on their level of comfort and their interests. Tailor responsibility to the individual and realize that everyone is talented in different ways.

Setup different committees in which groups of interested students can tackle specific issues together and report back to the group once conclusions or recommendations have been made. These committees can be about expansion, media, research, advocacy, fundraising, or other specific projects. The committees should meet separately and have a set of more targeted and in-depth agendas and objectives. Have a committee coordinator who sets up the meetings and runs the agenda. By creating more leadership roles within the group, you create more opportunities for leaders to develop. Growth for individuals ensures growth for the group.

Have a different person coordinate the group general meeting every time. People that run the meeting will feel very connected to the group while other members will see that the group is about every individual member and not just its leaders. The group exists to serve the interests and passions of all its members so make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute significantly. The more work is delegated effectively, the more commitment and interest people will have.

### *Remember What It's All About*

You are literally saving the lives of children around the world. Never let yourself and other people in the group forget that. There are not many, if any, more valuable things in the world that you could be doing instead. Whenever you feel unmotivated or tired, imagine the child that your actions are helping. It is time everyone has the opportunity to grow up healthy and with hope. It is up to each one of us to make that a reality.

## Recruiting Students to SCCS

### *The Basics*

No number of emails can replace an actual conversation. This applies to members in your group as well as to people you are trying to recruit. Get to know them and figure out how they feel about SCCS. Listen to them as much as possible and really understand their perspective and interests. Convey your passion for the issue. Your attitude will certainly have a powerful impact on theirs. Emphasize action and momentum. The time is now; the opportunity is here! We can make a difference today.

### *Recruiting People*

This is a list of different things you can talk about with students who are unfamiliar with SCCS. Tailor your talk to whomever you are speaking with and make sure you maintain their interest by asking them simple or specific questions.

- Introduce yourself and remember to smile!
- Ask how they became interested and how much they already know.
- Explain that the campaign arose in response to the crisis of child mortality and the simple and cost-effective solutions available to stem the crisis.
- Explain that we seek to provide a living chance to all children for the first time in history
- Explain that our government already does a lot but it's time the government truly acts according to its commitments and obligations
- Explain that we are a new movement that is beginning and that will be led by students
- Explain that we are establishing a network of students across the country to act for change
- Explain that we are encouraging Congress to increase funding for children's health
- Emphasize that now is a really exciting time to participate:
- Students have always played key roles in social movements (e.g. environmental, anti-apartheid, sweatshops)
- President Bush has committed to increasing aid but has been taking money away from child survival programs
- USAID's effectiveness at lowering infant mortality rates with government programs and funds is well documented
- Encourage students to learn more through our documents and our web page
- Gather a small group of interested students to discuss interests and see if starting a new chapter is feasible
- Engage in advocacy opportunities
- Write an article for publications like the school newspaper.
- Describe what your group is currently working on and how they can contribute.
- If they show any amount of interest make sure you get their email or in the case of a phone call, setup another date in which you can call them again. Point them to our cool website and promise them that you will email them soon.
- Always follow up with whatever you promise within two days. Email them appropriate documents that may be helpful.

How do you frame the issues? What is our main message? Check out Talking About SCCS online.