

# COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT MANUAL FOR TEENS



*These Seattle teens and mentors journeyed to build a new wing at an orphanage in Guaymas, Mexico*

*One caring heart can make the difference in the life of another*

## **What is a service project?**

A service project is an effort to help an individual, a family or an organization to accomplish a project which they don't have the means (time, money, energy or know-how) to do without help. You can do service projects on your own, with your youth group or with your family. Many times a service project can simply add joy to someone's life including your own.

Jesus' taught us: **“Whatsoever  
you do to the least of my  
brethren,  
ye do unto me.”**

### **What are the benefits of service projects?**

- By helping others, we help ourselves. Caring for others transforms our lives and our own problems seem less significant.
- Service projects help us, our groups and our families, grow stronger and can help individuals to identify a lifelong mission.
- We have gifts and talents to make someone else's life so much happier—and that is a powerful realization! You can shine while at the same time improve the quality of life for others.
- Through service we learn the value of work and are instilled with a work ethic.
- Working in a group is a fun opportunity to connect with others in the community as well as learn leadership and team-building skills.
- By giving of ourselves and serving others, we demonstrate America's greatest source of strength: active and engaged citizens. Our communities are fortified.

### **What are the special benefits of family service?**

There are four things we can do as teens to make a proven difference in our lives. Service is one of them. The four “difference makers” are:

1. *Talking about God and your faith with your mother.*
2. *Talking about God and your faith with your father.*
3. *Praying together as a family each day.*
4. *Doing service projects together as a family to help those in need.*

For more information on the four difference makers, go to [www.pathwayforfamilies.org](http://www.pathwayforfamilies.org). Go to Parents' Place and check the *Difference Makers*.

The joy of serving will be a gift to you!

## How do we find the right project?

**"We can do no great things; only  
small things with great love."  
Mother Teresa**

- ❖ *Talk to your family or youth group and pray to God for direction.* Whenever anyone gets an inspiration about service ideas, share it, and keep a record of the ideas.
- ❖ *Consider the situations in your community that touch your heart.* Have you seen pictures in a magazine or a newspaper article that touched your heart? Do you want to assist families who do not have sufficient resources for food? Does the idea of visiting a lonely shut-in appeal to you?
- ❖ *Look in local newspapers, talk with neighbors, contact local churches and volunteer agencies in your community, investigate charities on-line, etc.*
- ❖ *Choose what best suits you and your group or family's time, talents and interests.* Decide what you think you'd like to do and how much time you can give.
- ❖ *A phone call may connect you with friendly, helpful people who can help organize a service project.* If helping seniors is your goal, call local senior living homes. If you like pets, call the Humane Society or a local veterinarian.

## Suggestions for service projects

- *Distribute food to the needy.* Consider helping out in a local soup kitchen, stocking groceries in a food bank, or volunteer to deliver meals through the Meals-on-Wheels program.
- *Care for the Environment.* Participate in a community program to beautify the environment by picking up trash, planting gardens and landscaping. Or you can create your own cleanup crew and beautify an area.
- *Collect clothes for the needy.* Your community may have a coat collection team to provide warm coats for people who cannot afford them or you may want to start one.
- *Assist the Senior Citizens in your Neighborhood.* You may not have to go any further than your neighborhood to help seniors: mowing lawns, shoveling snow, raking leaves, cleaning, playing music or reading to someone.



*Keeping a neighbor company*

- *Help a child learn to read.* Children love to be read to. You can help neighbors with their children by reading to a younger child or offering a weekly story hour for neighborhood children.
- *Visit the sick.* There may be someone in your community, young or old, who has just returned from the hospital and would appreciate a visit or might need help. Hospitals often have

volunteer service programs that provide home care to patients, who may require some assistance. Children's hospitals often welcome volunteers to play with the younger children in the hospital.

- *Sponsor a child.* Commit to regularly sending money for a needy child or raise money to buy necessary items for the child. Your family can exchange pictures and personal letters with a sponsored child, wherever they are - even plan a vacation to visit the child. Help out at an orphanage in Mexico.
- *Build shelters for the homeless.* Contact Habitat for Humanity: <http://www.habitat.org/>. Habitat allows youth 16 years or older to help with actual building projects; but will often accommodate families with younger children by creating opportunities for them to help in a safer environment. Check with local churches as they may know where assistance is needed.



*Helping out by painting*

- *Fundraise for charity.* Hold a bake sale or a bike-a-thon to raise money for an orphanage. Assist in a home-building program for the poor in Mexico or Tibet. Earn money for a charitable organization.
- *Care for Animals.* Volunteer in an animal shelter to take dogs for walks.



*Walking a dog for the Humane Society*

- *Raise Awareness about issues of importance to your group or to your family.* Choose an important issue with your child, such as abortion, cigarette smoking, drug abuse, or alcohol abuse. Start a poster or a letter-writing campaign, or prepare a public presentation.
- *Volunteer in a profession of interest.* Some teens volunteer to help professionals in a career area that interests them. Many professionals will trust responsible youth with greater responsibilities as they prove themselves. It provides career experience and may produce a job offer!

## **Making your commitment**

**Once you decide on a service project, be dependable as people are counting on you!**

## **Family service project example:**

### **Kathleen's story**

Living in a large Midwestern city, Kathleen's family reserves Sunday evening as Family Night. Twice a month they facilitate a Karaoke Night at a local Assisted Living Home. Trained to operate the equipment and converse with the residents, Kathleen and her children serve refreshments and operate the karaoke machine which provides the entertainment. The older daughter also spends an additional hour there

once a week with an “adopted grandmother”. Interacting with the seniors and hearing them reminisce about their lives has become the highlight of their week. Kathleen’s family soon realized that serving the seniors has transformed their lives.

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Kathleen feels that her children’s hearts have expanded from this activity. “For 1 ½ - 2 hours a week, we set our lives aside and experience other peoples’ lives and get a new viewpoint.”

**“We bring joy and happiness and assistance to someone else. And, it comes right back to us!”**  
*Kathleen*

**Keep the joy of loving God in your heart and share this joy with all you meet, especially your family. Be holy—let us pray.**

Mother Teresa

## **Resources for service projects**

### **National organizations that list volunteer positions**

<http://www.volunteersolutions.org>

<http://www.volunteermatch.org>

<http://www.pointsoflight.org>

### **Organizations that assist in sponsoring children**

[www.worldvision.org](http://www.worldvision.org)

[www.compassion.net](http://www.compassion.net)

## **References**

*Family Friendly Church* by Ben Freudenburg with Rick Lawrence, Group Publishing.

A simple and inspiring book about how to make churches “family friendly” and how to reestablish priorities in families within your home

*Teaching Your Children Values* by Linda and Richard Eyre.

A wonderful handbook for creating opportunities for families to learn together, including learning about service and love to others.

*What You Can See, You Can Be!* by David A. Anderson.

A children's book with awesome illustrations about the power of positive thinking; about imaging your perfect project, opportunity, friends, etc.