



**he Benefits of Volunteering with your Family.
October / November - By Cimi Douglass, 2nd VP**

As we all know, there are hundreds of ways to volunteer. But one of the best ways to volunteer is with your family. Invite your family members to join your club or service activities, especially if you have young children or grandchildren. Why? Because when parents or grandparents make volunteering a family affair, both the community and the family benefit. Fall activities, Thanksgiving and the overall holiday season are quickly approaching so now is the perfect time! I'd like to pass on a few bullet points I came across which was originally written by Marie Hartwell-Walker, Ed.D.

Here are some ways volunteering enriches a family:

- **Working side by side provides opportunities for connection and communication.** It sometimes seems that we live in a time that conspires against family togetherness. When everyone is on a different device, even when we're in the same room, we aren't enjoying and learning from each other. Whether cleaning up a trail or working a food booth - there is something very satisfying about working together. That's why we all joined our women's clubs. The back and forth banter, laughter and problem-solving that go on strengthen and deepen our friendships and they will do the same for your family relationships.
- **The job is always done quickly and better if we work as a team.** Making a community meal, planting a garden or cleaning cages all go more smoothly with teamwork. Volunteering takes teamwork off the soccer field and into life. Working as a team on a task reinforces a family's ability to work as a team at home.
- **Kids and parents will see each other in a different light.** When parents work outside the home, as most of us do, our work is a mystery to our children. They often have only the vaguest idea of what we do all day. When the whole family participates on a project, parents and children get to see and appreciate each other's skills and competence.
- **Volunteer activities often require problem-solving.** Volunteer jobs often require people to figure out where to put things, how to fix things, or how to be more efficient. Finding real solutions to real problems can be a source of enormous satisfaction for everyone involved. Volunteering at a young age will teach them how to take charge and lead. Learning leadership skills will provide confidence and help them as they journey to adulthood.
- **Volunteering is an antidote to pessimism and negativity.** The media bombards us with visions of terrorism, war, disease, wrecks and worries. News consistently repeats the tragedies of the day. Social media adds to that negativity. Feeling helpless to do anything about it can foster hopelessness and depression. Families who are

actively involved in righting some wrongs, contributing to a community's health, and doing good in the world are families who have reason to feel more optimistic.

- **Volunteering fosters empathy.** It doesn't teach children much to tell them to "think about the starving children in our third world countries" when they won't eat their veggies. But working in a food pantry or soup kitchen certainly does. It moves the needs of others from remote abstraction to something very real and immediate. Being directly involved gives both parents and kids a deeper appreciation for what they have and what others need.
- **Volunteering increases the family's social network and safety net.** Volunteering is a low-pressure way to get to know new people and perhaps to make new friends. Some of those friends may become part of the inner circle who know and love our kids, just as we know and love theirs. Families who survive and thrive when they encounter challenges, are families who have multiple people they trust to turn to.

Not old enough? Not a problem!

Many places like shelters or other groups may have age restrictions on who can come help. Don't let that stop you and your young ones from doing good! If you want to help serve food with the kids at a homeless shelter, some shelters may allow you to make food in bulk at home ahead of time and drop it off. This lets even the little ones get in on the volunteering action. Children can also get involved—and learn the value of volunteering—at an early age by donating toys, books and school supplies they've outgrown. Talk with them about what it means to give away their old things and how another child's life could be improved. Then, actively engage them in organizing a book, toy or school supply drive. You'll be surprised by just how much project management the kids have in them!

Volunteering is at an all-time high. More and more youth are participating in community service projects and joining service organizations. Teens as well as adults are looking for ways to have impact and to give life meaning. Many parents find that working with their children on projects where their help is really needed strengthens family bonds and nurtures the whole family's positive self-esteem. By doing some good in the world, everyone feels good about themselves and their family. Here are a few things you can do with your family this season.

Fall Family Service Ideas

There's fun to be had for the whole family during Fall. As the season turns, do a good turn for your community and help make sure everyone has a happy and healthy Fall and Halloween season.

- **Save your change for UNICEF** – <http://www.unicef.org/>. **UNICEF's mission is** to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. Ask the kiddos to donate a few pennies for the box!
- **Volunteer to be a safety patrol in your neighborhood** during Halloween trick or treating timeframes. Give out glow sticks for Halloween.
- **Write Thank YOU's to our Armed Services** who are serving during the season.
- **Prepare trick-or-treat goodie bags** and bring to local children's hospitals, fire stations, post office or your local V.A. or retirement homes. Better yet, make goodie bags for your local Humane Society with dog/cat treats! Kids love assembly lines, invite the neighbor's kids too!
- **Organize a festive fundraiser** - A festive Fall Festival or Halloween blast is a great opportunity to bring the whole community together and help a good cause (and to possibly recruit new members). Propose a chili cookoff or call on those with baking talents to bake apple pies and cobblers from the season's harvest and sell them to sweet-toothed neighbors. Collect the proceeds and donate them to a worthy cause in your area. And don't forget to have your community members show up in costume!
- **Book Drive & Bonfires:** Fall is the ideal time to read scary or not so scary stories around a bonfire. Have kids choose their favorites, then collect the community's old books (scary or not)—and make it a book drive while reading, roasting marshmallows, enjoying family/community time all collecting books for your book drive to donate to retirement centers, schools, hospitals, V.A. etc.

➤ **November - Thank volunteers.** If you're unable to make a volunteer commitment this season, thank those who can. Send a note to your local fire dept or a thank you letter to shelter volunteers. Or make sure those Salvation Army volunteers ringing holiday bells stay warm too with gloves, hats and coffee or hot cocoa (and donate to their cause!).

Volunteer at soup kitchen, shelter or invite your family members and make bag lunches for local homeless shelter in your area.

➤ **Give your children \$20** and take the shopping and have them choose purchase canned goods for shelters. This could be an economic lesson, comparing price points. Remember the Dollar Store has gloves and socks, have them purchase the gloves or socks to go to the local shelters.

Ø **Spread the warmth.** Heating and utility costs during winter months can climb quickly. There are some that can't afford heat on a fixed income. Discuss with children/family and **donate to Energy Assistance - Heating Energy Assistance Team (H.E.A.T.)** - 678.406.0212. <https://www.heatga.org/>. Heating Energy Assistance Team (H.E.A.T.), Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization that has been assisting Georgians with their home energy needs since 1983. They help low-income households meet their energy needs through partnerships with concerned citizens, energy companies, state government, community action agencies, corporations, and other organizations.

Ø **Adopt a Grandmother or Grandfather** at your local nursing home. Bring goodies, a beautiful seasonal wreath for their door, host a craft day.

Ø **Tie Small Blankets for Children Shelters**

- Sitting in the family room during Thanksgiving, break out the "no-tie" blankets and after Thanksgiving dinner, ask everyone to help tie blankets for the children's shelter or for children's hospitals. One year I purchased a no-tie blanket for my husband's 2 grandkids and we tied blankets which were to be given to a shelter.

There's nothing like volunteering to change your community for the better with your loved ones!

Feel free to pass this on to your local CSP chairs and their club members.

I hope this is the type of communication and ideas that you are seeking

Next newsletter will be on reporting/judging.

Contact me anytime!

Thanks!

Cimi Douglass

2nd VP, North West District