

MLK Day of Service Mobilization Resource

Involve Kids in the MLK Day of Service

(Pre-Kindergarten- 8th grade)

Children volunteering benefits everyone! Through volunteering youth learn to respect others; learn to be helpful and kind; learn to understand people who are different from them; develop leadership skills, become more patient, and gain a better understanding of good citizenship. Volunteering at an early age can create positive life behaviors. Children who volunteer are three times more likely to volunteer as adults.¹ Steady volunteering, even at a minimum of one hour a week, reduces negative behaviors. For example, youth are 50% less likely to abuse drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or engage in destructive behavior.² It's never too early to start to volunteer! Children have many opportunities to help their communities.

The projects below are all age appropriate under the supervision of an adult.

Pre-K to Second Grades

Make cards for nursing home residents. Contact a local hospital or nursing home to see if they would welcome having children make cards for residents. These cards can be holiday specific or just a lovely way to say hello and let that person know that s/he is being thought of.

Adopt an elderly neighbor or nursing home. They can bring cards, or small treats like handmade ornaments or cookies. It would also be a treat to have the children visit and sing or do other performances for nursing home residents.

Have a book drive. Ask children to bring books from home that they are no longer reading, or would like to give to a child in need. These books can be brought to local hospitals or shelters.

Help bake and decorate cookies. These cookies can be sold as a fundraiser or donated to an organization of the children's choosing. This is a great opportunity to teach children about those in need in their community.

Color lunch bags. These bags can be used to package snacks, treats, or lunches that can be collected for needy children. Inquire at high schools or community service centers to see if they have a program in place that would be able to benefit from the donated bags.

Third – Fifth Grades

Make fleece blankets for children in the hospital. These blankets are easy to make and involve no sewing. The blankets can be donated to a children's wing of a hospital or a daycare center.

(<http://hubpages.com/hub/How-to-Make-a-Blanket>)

¹ Independent Sector/Gallup, 1996

² Search Institute, 1995

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Collect and sort school supplies to benefit a local shelter or library. Keep a box in your classroom for the designated items, then create school kits that can be donated to needy students. Get the word out to parents, faculty, administrators and the community at large about the collection.

Raking leaves/ shoveling snow for elderly or disabled neighbors. This can be done as an after school program or weekend event. In warmer climates, students could plant flowers to beautify neighbors' yards and the community. See if a local home store or nursery will donate the plants.

Create a game night at a local home for adults with disabilities. Call local group homes to see if they would appreciate a night of games and snacks for their residents. Have children bring in their favorite games to share.

Sixth to Eighth Grades

Walking/Grooming animals at a local shelter. Contact your local animal shelter and ask them if they have volunteer opportunities. If they don't have room for volunteers, children can collect food for the animals or raise money for the shelter.

Volunteering at a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Most soup kitchens are adept at having roles for all ages of volunteers. Volunteers can be used to serve food, make placemats for the tables, and read stories to younger children.

Participating in charity walks/runs. Involve your class in participating in a previously scheduled run/walk or create an event in which the school can participate. Partner the day with a health fair that teaches healthy eating and living arrangements. Have students learn about healthy eating and serve as teachers.

Sponsor an Art Show. Have students create art projects with Dr. Martin Luther King's teachings as a theme. Have a student panel to award prizes for various age groups or project types. A bake sale could also be included in this project to benefit a local charity. Close the event with students reading one of Dr. King's speeches.

Additional Resources:

Do Something. Provides the tools and resources for you to convert your ideas and energy into positive action. www.dosomething.org

Children for Children. Children for Children mobilizes the energy, ingenuity and compassion of young people, beginning at an early age, to discover their power and potential to solve real world problems through volunteer opportunities and service learning programs that instill a lifelong commitment to service. www.childrenforchildren.org

www.MLKDay.gov. Tips and various resources on how to start planning your MLK Day project. www.mlkday.gov/resources

Youth Service America (www.ysa.org)

Global Youth Service Day Planning Toolkit--

<http://ysa.org/GlobalYouthServiceDay/GYSDDTools/GYSDDToolsPlanningMaterials/tabid/118/Default.aspx>

Semester of Service Guide--<http://tools.ysa.org/downloads/gysd/semester.pdf>