

## **FAMILY SERVICE PROJECT IDEAS**

### ***Feed the hungry***

- Help prepare food at a soup kitchen.
- Cook and deliver a meal to someone who is lonely or who is in the midst of tragedy, illness, or crisis.
- Plant a vegetable garden. Take some of your produce to a local shelter or soup kitchen, or share with a struggling family.
- Collect non-perishable items for your local food bank. Encourage your friends to donate too.
- Volunteer with Meals on Wheels. <https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/>
- Partner with the Feed My Starving Children program. <https://www.fmssc.org/About-Us>

### ***Give water to the thirsty***

- Have a lemonade stand or car wash to raise money for a ministry that provides clean water for third world countries.

### ***Clothe the naked***

- Contact a local thrift store and ask to help sort donated items.
- Clean out closets and donate gently used clothing (toys, games, and books too).
- Donate coats (or blankets/sleeping bags) to a 'Keep Warm in the Winter' drive.
- Organize or participate in a Hat & Mitten drive for local school children.

### ***Shelter the homeless***

- Make hygiene bags and give them to your local homeless shelter. (Call the shelter for a list of what should be included.)
- Volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, or work to build/repair homes through other avenues. <https://www.habitat.org/>

### ***Visit and care for the sick***

- Call a hospice center and ask if there are errands you can run for their patients.
- Collect toys for the cancer ward of your children's hospital.
- Knit stocking caps and/or blankets and deliver to a cancer clinic.

### ***Visit and care for the elderly***

- Do yard work for an elderly neighbor.
- Offer to run errands for an elderly neighbor (or other person in need). Make a grocery run, swing by the pharmacy, or give them a ride to church.

- Help a senior citizen or a person with a disability with simple fix-it projects around the house, like changing lightbulbs or cleaning gutters.
- When bad weather is coming, call an elderly neighbor or other needy person to check on them. Offer to let them come to your home before the weather hits your area.
- Help seniors learn to use a computer and Facebook, or email, to stay in touch with their own families and grandchildren.
- Visit a local nursing home. Not sure what to do while you are there? You can:
  - play an instrument
  - sing a song, or arrange for a group or choir to sing there
  - take a pet to visit
  - paint the residents' nails and give hand massages, host a BINGO game
  - create cards or a craft to give to the residents
  - play board games with them
  - plant a garden for them
  - just talk to them and listen to their stories

***Visit and care for the lonely***

- Befriend a lonely person and arrange that your family and/or you will visit regularly.
- Make Valentine's Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Halloween (or any other holiday) cards and deliver them to an assisted living facility. Arrange to go during meal time so that you can visit with residents.
- Read a story aloud to a neighbor or other person in need of company and comfort.

***Pray for the living and the dead***

- Go on a prayer walk around your neighborhood. Pray for each home and the families who live there.
- Pray and/or fast for any intention.

***Care for families and children***

- Call someone who has recently had a baby and volunteer to take their other children to the park.
- Bake cookies or bring snacks to a community center that provides after school care for families.
- Offer to babysit (for free) for an evening for a single parent.
- Babysit (for free) to help a married couple enjoy some time focusing on their marriage relationship.
- Offer to drive carpool for a family who is going through a difficult season.

- Invite a new family in your church over for dinner.
- If you are crafty, make blankets, bibs, and hats for your local crisis pregnancy center. Organize a diaper drive or volunteer at your local pregnancy care center or take other donations to them. (Call to learn what they need.)
- Adopt an Angel from a Giving Tree.
- Donate to Toys for Tots.

***Show appreciation***

- Bake cookies and take them to the police or fire station, or to your neighbors.
- Create thank you gifts for local law enforcement officers or fire fighters.
- Write thank you notes to veterans and deliver them to the VA hospital.
- Write letters or send cards/gifts to troops.
- Mow the grass, pull weeds, rake leaves, or shovel snow for a neighbor, especially for one who is out of town.
- Write a 'thank you' note to a teacher, coach, babysitter, or other special person in your life.

***Encourage education***

- Tutor students at a community center.
- Visit a daycare to read to the children or do craft time.
- Make "exam week care kits" of snacks, gift cards, and other fun items - and a card of encouragement - for college students (particularly if you live in a college town).
- Donate books to a book drive, library, daycare, or homeless shelter.
- Collect school supplies for children whose families cannot afford them. Your children's school or school district may be holding a drive for this purpose, as well as local retailers.

***Caring for God's nonhuman creatures***

- Hold a "dog wash" to raise money for a local animal shelter.
- Walk dogs at your local animal shelter.
- Foster a pet.
- Care for a neighbor's pet.
- Bring food, toys, old blankets/towels to a local animal shelter; call the shelter to see what they need and accept.
- Volunteer at an animal shelter doing simple tasks such as cleaning cages, answering phones, or making holiday decorations for the shelter waiting room. Contact a local shelter and speak with a volunteer coordinator to see what help is needed.

### ***Caring for God's good Earth***

- Help with landscaping at a local park, community center, or your church.
- Sort items at your local recycling center.
- Volunteer with a wildlife conservationist or park staff. They are usually short-handed and will be glad for you to help with different projects.
- Trash pick-up on roadways. You can contact your city/county road departments to ask about picking up garbage from roads.
- Trash pick-up on wildlife management areas (WMAs) or pick up trash along trails as you hike.
- Recycling of garbage from businesses.
- Invasive plant removal (parks, WMAs, roadways).
- Building/installing blue bird boxes, bat boxes (or any nesting structures). Instructions for building nesting structures can be obtained from the internet.
- Plant a neighborhood garden or a tree for all to enjoy (with proper municipal permissions, of course). <https://www.arboday.org/>
- Help clean up a local waterway.
- Begin composting at home and/or encourage another organization to do so.
- Recycle at home and/or encourage an organization you belong to to recycle.
- Turn off lights and other electronic devices to save energy, encourage others to do so too.
- Carpool and merge errands in order to save fuel and reduce emissions, encourage others to do so too.
- Always seek ways to reduce your use of Earth's limited resources:  
*Refuse/Reduce/Reuse/Recycle.*
- Create a habitat for wildlife: <https://www.nwf.org/en/Garden-for-Wildlife/Create>.
- Partner with these groups to sponsor or adopt endangered species and/or their habitats:
  - Nature Conservancy: "Adopt an Acre" or "Rescue the Reef" <https://www.nature.org/>
  - Rainforest Alliance: "Adopt-a-Rainforest" <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>
  - World Wildlife Fund <https://www.worldwildlife.org/>

### ***For those with athletic interests***

- Volunteer at a Special Olympics event. There are hundreds of Special Olympics offices around the world, and all of them need volunteers at various times during the year.  
[www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)

- There are fund-raising walks and runs held year-round. Volunteer to help, or sign up to participate in one of these charity walk/runs.
- Volunteer to help coach a youth sports team.

#### **Other ideas**

- Go on a mission trip which aims to serve in whichever way you feel called. It can last for part of just one day, or it can last for a week or more.
  - See U.S. mission opportunities offered through World Vision: [http://www.worldvisionusprograms.org/us\\_missions.php](http://www.worldvisionusprograms.org/us_missions.php)
  - For parishes: consider the *Families on a Mission* resource <https://www.cmdnet.org/cmd-webinar-listings/product/77-families-on-a-mission>
- Ask a ministry in your church to give you a specific item you can provide for them. Hold a garage sale or find other ways to raise the money to buy it.
- Help to clean your church.
- If you have a local organization, or if your church collects donated items, volunteer to help sort and shelve the items.
- Organize or volunteer at a charity auction, or donate items or services.
- Ask for donations for others rather than a gift for yourself at a birthday party or other occasion. Or, ask for a non-perishable food item for your local food pantry in addition to a regular gift.
- Buy gifts to give from an organization that supports others, such as Serrv. [www.serrv.org](http://www.serrv.org)
- There are many ready-made opportunities to volunteer at your local church or school.
- Find an organization that needs blankets. (The maternity wards in hospitals, homeless shelters, and Women's centers are great places to start.) It's easy to make fleece blankets, children as young as six can participate. All that is required is fleece material and scissors. The size will depend on where you plan to take the blankets. (Ask the person at the cutting counter of your local fabric store! Tell her (or him) the purpose of the blanket (baby blanket, lap quilt, twin blanket...) and she (or he) may be able to help you choose the right amount of fabric.
  - Instructions:
    - Cut a 5 inch square piece of paper or cardboard to use as a pattern. Lay the pattern on a corner of your fabric and cut off the corner. Repeat on the remaining three corners.
    - Cut strips in the fabric along one edge. The strips should be about 3/4 inch wide and the same depth as your pattern (5 inches).

- Tie a simple knot at the end of each strip. (This is the part even young children can do.)
- Repeat on the remaining three sides of fabric.

If this will be a large project, consider asking for fabric donations. If you are shopping at a fabric store, there are often deep discount coupons available online or in your local newspaper flier.

**Web resources**

- If you enjoy “pinning”, there are many family service ideas to be found on: [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)
- [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org) is an organization that matches volunteers with non-profits according to needs and interests or skills.
- [www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org) is an organization dedicated to helping people to volunteer and serve.
- [www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org) Youth Service America is dedicated to mobilizing youth into service.
- [www.family-to-family.org](http://www.family-to-family.org) is an organization that connects donors with families in need.

**Book resource**

- *Doing Good Together: 101 Easy Meaningful Service Projects for Families, Schools, and Communities* by Jenny Friedmand and Jolene Roehlkepartain (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2010).

*“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*

*- 1 Peter 4:10*