

365 Community Service Ideas

General Ideas:

1. Set up a Help-O-Meter to keep track of the number of hours youth volunteer in the community.
2. Organize a recognition program for the volunteers who lead community organizations.
3. Work in a concession stand to raise money for a good cause.
4. Make a gift for the secretary of a non-profit organization you are associated with.
5. Take photos during an event and donate them to the event organizers.
6. Volunteer to be a museum guide.
7. Plan an Ethnic Awareness day.
8. Design a campaign to promote tolerance and understanding of differences.
9. Volunteer at a health fair.
10. Volunteer as a counselor at local summer camp.
11. Volunteer to do office work at a local non-profit agency.
12. Set up a web page for a non-profit agency.
13. Volunteer to lead a club of youth.
14. Share a talent through teaching a class.
15. Make birthday cards for the elderly.
16. Run or walk in a charity race with friends.
17. Stage a carnival to promote community spirit.
18. Ask your mayor to sign a proclamation for an important community event.
19. Ask your governor to sign a proclamation for a national event.
20. Practice random acts of kindness.
21. Stage a marathon to raise money for a cause.
22. Organize an exchange between rural and urban individuals to promote understanding.
23. Volunteer to help at charity auctions.
24. Volunteer your talents at a charity auction.
4. Participate in National Youth Service Day in April.
5. On Thanksgiving, make sure your family knows what you are thankful for.
6. Trim a mitten Christmas tree to donate mittens to local schools and homeless shelters.
7. Organize a coat drive in which old coats are donated for use by needy people.
8. Contact a local tree farm about donating a Christmas tree to a nursing home, homeless shelter or needy family.
9. Decorate a Christmas tree at a nursing home, hospital, school or homeless shelter.
10. Ring the bell for Salvation Army during the holidays.
11. Deliver a May Day basket.
12. Offer safety tips for youngsters during Halloween.
13. Conduct an Easter Egg Hunt for needy children.
14. On St. Patrick's Day, don't only wear something green, care for something green!
15. Volunteer to return shopping carts during National Supermarkets Month in February.
16. Make Spring baskets for seniors' residential facility, neighbors or homeless shelters.
17. On International Picnic Day in May, take your family or friends on a picnic. You supply the food and let Mother Nature supply the ants!
18. Make a Halloween Safety Kit for youth.
19. Give your Mom a hug and a homemade card for Mother's Day.
20. On Johnny Appleseed Day in March, deliver apples to homeless shelters.
21. July is Anti-Boredom Month. Help your friends fight boredom by becoming active community volunteers.
22. During July on National Cheer-Up Day, share a smile and cheer someone up.
23. Mow the lawn for your Dad on Father's Day.

On the Calendar:

1. Conduct a community service project during the Big Help Day in October.
2. Plan a Memorial Day program.
3. Recognize veterans in your community.

Children, Family & Friends:

1. Surprise your parent(s) or neighbors and offer to babysit a sibling, relative or friend.
2. Design a game for young children.

3. Explore history by interviewing a nursing home resident about how they grew up.
4. Check on either a younger student or an elderly person after school.
5. Read a book to a younger kid a blind person or an older neighbor.
6. Cheer up a sick friend with a visit or phone call.
7. Celebrate a birthday by asking friends to donate items for causes instead of gifts.
8. Make get well cards for people in hospitals and convalescent homes.
9. Become pen pals to a younger person or someone from another country.
10. Knit or crochet baby blankets.
11. Conduct a clothing repair or sewing workshop for needy people.
12. Assemble a new parent's kit for the arrival of a newborn.
13. Collect old magazines and donate them to day care centers.
14. Quilt a blanket for newborn babies.
15. Plant a tree or present a tree to the parents for each baby born in your community.
16. Collect unused make-up, perfume and other cosmetics for a center for abused women.
17. Make a cancer or aids quilt or mural to remember people of who have died from these diseases and remind others of their life.
18. Write a kids' book author and ask them to donate signed copies, auction the books off and donate the money to local library.
19. Donate old eyeglasses to an organization or place that recycles them for the needy.
20. Collect old stuffed animals and dolls, clean them up, repair them and donate them.
21. Organize a babysitting service for foster families.
22. Collect old clothes and donate them for a dress-up area at a daycare.
6. Ask your parents to help you get your town to fix dangerous intersections.
7. Conduct a bicycle rodeo to help children learn bicycle safety.
8. Create a poison awareness campaign.
9. Ask your fire department how you can help others learn about fire safety.
10. Get permission to fix up your town's fire hydrants.
11. Make emergency kits for your home.
12. Collect money for a good cause.
13. Create a holiday safety video.
14. Start a campaign against teen suicide.
15. Volunteer at a police station.
16. Become a certified lifeguard and volunteer at a swimming pool.
17. If you're good at fixing bikes, volunteer to teach others how to fix their bikes.
18. Conduct bike safety checks for your neighborhood.
19. Sponsor a drug free post prom event.
20. Organize a drug free pledge campaign.

Crime Fighting:

Safety:

1. Take a life-saving class.
2. Create a play that teaches young children how to stay safe at home.
3. Design a flier of after-school safety tips and deliver it to daycare centers and grade schools.
4. Check railroad crossings and make signs to promote safety.
5. Offer a safety workshop prior to July 4th.
1. Start a Crime clue box.
2. Survey your neighborhood to find out what people think are the leading crime causes.
3. Start a neighborhood watch program.
4. Join a community crime prevention organizations such as DARE or McGruff Program.
5. Work with local government to start a victim's aid support service.
6. Create a TV or radio public service announcement against drugs and alcohol.
7. Paint over graffiti.
8. Organize a self-defense workshop.
9. Create a billboard for goo graffiti, allow people to paint sections.
10. Produce an anti-crime, anti-drug, anti-violence play.
11. Sponsor a TV blackout event that kids spend time with their family rather than watch TV.
12. Create and distribute a list of hotlines for kids who might need help.
13. School Activities:
14. Paint a mural over graffiti.
15. Volunteer to be a teacher's aide during your study hall.
16. Collect coupons and small gift certificates for students who show progress in school work.

17. Hold a used book sale and donate the money.
18. Organize a “get acquainted” lunch for students at your school.
19. Set up a buddy system to match new students with ones who have attended school.
20. Start an anti-smoking campaign that encourages students not to smoke.
21. Encourage the school cafeteria to donate left over food to local homeless shelters.
22. Tutor students who are learning English as a second language.
23. Feature community minded people on a school bulletin board.
24. Make new kid survival kits for new students at the school.
25. Have your class hold an old videotape drive and donate them to your library.
26. Invite local police officers to present a drug awareness or bike safety assembly.
27. In art class, make drawings and decorations for senior citizens.
28. Collect school supplies to give to kids who need them.
29. Form a study group to help younger kids with their school work.
30. Collect children’s books for the needy.
31. Volunteer for student council and school government committees.
32. Tape you and your classmates reading a story and give it to a children’s hospital.
33. Form a campus safety escort service.
34. Put on an information fair on how little kids can be safe at home.
35. Tutor a student that needs help learning English or some other subject.
36. Conduct a canned goods drive during a school event and donate the items to a local food bank.
37. Arrange for student music performances during lunch.
38. Make a New Kid Survival Kit.
39. Start a New Buddy Club for new students.
40. Create a play that teaches young children how to stay safe at home while their parents are away.
41. Provide child care during a PTA meeting.
42. Conduct a seatbelt check at school as students leave the parking lot.
43. Organize a safe walk to school event.
44. Recognize teachers during National Education Week.
45. Volunteer to be part of a school flag raising ceremony.
46. Assist an after-school little league or other sports program for younger children.
47. Volunteer to serve as a crossing guard before and after school.
48. Set up a volunteer referral service between your school or organization and other community organizations.
49. Write or make a picture book to read to a younger youth.
50. Inspect school playgrounds for hazards.
51. Write a proposal for a sports safety clinic to your coach and school officials.
52. Organize a Safe Walk Service to escort young children to and from schools.
53. Make simple reading and math flash cards for a preschool or day care center.
54. Organize a reading hour for children at your local school or library.

Government

1. Telephone residents and encourage them to register to vote.
2. Provide a voter pick up or transportation service for seniors.
3. Campaign for a candidate who is running for an office.
4. Organize a public issues forum for candidates.
5. Contact your juvenile court system. Find out if they have a “Kids in Court” program to match older kids who have been in court as abuse victims with younger kids who are facing a court experience.
6. Go door to door to register votes.
7. Design and paint a community mural.
8. Become an advocate. Contact your legislators on issues close to your heart.
9. Contact a local organization about donating flags to public institutions.

Helping the Hungry and/or Homeless:

1. Help cook and/or serve a meal at homeless shelter.
2. During National Nutrition month in March, organize a nutrition awareness campaign.
3. Organize a food scavenger hunt to collect food for the needy.

4. Alter and repair clothes for the needy, elderly and homeless.
5. Gather clothing from your neighbor and donate it to a local shelter.
6. Make "I Care" kits with combs, toothbrushes, shampoo, etc. for homeless people.
7. Bake bread on National Bread Day in November and deliver to the hungry, homeless or just your neighbors.
8. Help with repairs at a local homeless shelter.
9. Donate art supplies to kids in a homeless shelter.
10. Make a care package with mittens, socks, T-shirts, etc. for a child at a homeless shelter.
11. Collect grocery coupons to give a local food bank.
12. If your community doesn't have a food bank, work with local officials to start one.
13. Clip coupons and give them at your local food pantry or homeless shelter.
14. Pack and hand out food at a food bank.
15. Organize a neighborhood group to plant, tend and harvest a vegetable garden.
16. Donate the produce to a food bank.
17. Sponsor a food drive at your school or parent's workplace or business.
18. Prepare a home-cooked meal for the residents of a nearby homeless shelter.
19. Bake a batch of cookies and deliver them to a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
20. Raid your closet and attic to find toys and clothes to donate to a homeless shelter.
21. Assist with sorting and organizing items donated to a homeless shelter.
22. Food drive - set up collection bins in stores, banks, movie theaters, and schools.
23. Start a program to help poor people build their own houses.
24. Assist in a shelter day-care room, taking care of children while parents look for jobs.
25. Help raise money for Reading Is Fundamental Open Book Program - Have a Read-a-Thon or Book Auction.
26. Take homeless children on outings.
27. Make first aid kits for homeless shelters.
28. Contact a homeless shelter in your community and see if they already have a reading center and need help to keep the project going.
29. Set up a Saturday Reading Hour where you visit a homeless shelter once a month, bringing books to share and leave behind.
30. Collect items to deliver to homeless shelters (blankets, sheets, towels, toys, books, disposable diapers.)
31. Become a Big Buddy for one or more of the children at the homeless shelter.
32. Find out about low-cost housing in your area for the homeless people.
33. Contact job training and placement centers in your community.

For Those with Special Needs:

1. Volunteer to help at a Special Olympics event.
2. Set up a buddy system for kids with special needs at your school.
3. Raise money for Braille or large print books for blind or visually impaired people.
4. Volunteer at an agency that works with children with disabilities.
5. Read books or the newspaper on tape for blind or visually impaired people.
6. Make gifts with friends for kids in the hospital.
7. Prepare sack lunches and deliver them to homeless or homebound people.
8. Bring toys to children in the cancer ward of a hospital.
9. Work with physically challenged kids on an art project.
10. Build a ramp for a person in a wheelchair so it is easier for them to get in and out of their house.
11. Clean a neighbor's yard who cannot do it themselves.
12. Get your class to put together a library at a children's hospital.
13. Give valentines and other cards in individuals who are in the local hospital.
14. Hold an Athletics Contest.
15. Visit a rehabilitation center. Learn about patients with special needs. Volunteer to help.
16. Neighborhood Enhancement:
17. Help neighbors paint and repair their homes.
18. Arrange for the local health department to conduct neighborhood health checks.
19. Volunteer to teach classes on a sport you enjoy and know a lot about.
20. Contact Habitat for Humanity to see how you can support them in your community.
21. Work with the local health department to set up an immunization day or clinic to immunize children against childhood diseases.

22. Organize a newcomers group in your neighborhood to welcome new families.
23. Produce a neighborhood newspaper.
24. Train to become a guide for your local tourist bureau.
25. Make maps of local parks, libraries or historic sites.
26. Research local historic sites and provide the research to visitor's bureau.
27. Petition your city to make drinking fountains and/or restrooms in public areas available.
28. Volunteer to clean up trash at a community event or county fair.
29. Make signs to label community buildings and sites of interest.
30. Set up an art exhibit at a local business, school or nursing home.
31. Design a mural or quilt highlighting important aspects of the community.
32. Organize a campaign to paint storm drains to prevent dumping of hazardous materials.
33. Set up an informational display at a local library.
34. Volunteer to help with Vacation Bible School.
35. Organize a community chorus, orchestra or band.
36. Volunteer to help set up for a community event.
37. Distribute leaf bags during the fall encouraging residents to clean leaves from their streets and yards.
38. Adopt a pothole and raise funds to repair it.
39. Plan native flowers or plants along highways.
40. Adopt a billboard and use it for a public service announcement.
41. Campaign for additional lighting along poorly lighted streets.
42. Clean up vacant lot.
43. Collect supplies for persons who have been in a fire or natural disaster.
44. Help fix a run-down playground.
45. Start a yard of the week award for your neighborhood.
46. Participate in an Annual parade.
47. Spruce up and paint the community or youth center.
48. Plant a community garden. Adopt a town monument and keep it clean.
49. Clean an elderly neighbor's driveway and sidewalk after a snowfall.
50. Clean up after a natural disaster.
51. Organize a local blood drive with the American Red Cross.
52. Plant flowers at town hall.
53. Organize a campaign to raise money to buy and install new playground equipment for a park.
54. Survey community agencies to learn the leading causes of accidents in your community then design a campaign to reduce accidents.
55. Paint a mural or clean up a local park.
56. Plant flowers in public areas that could use some color.
57. Mow the lawns and care for the plants of neighbors who are away on vacation.
58. Conduct a community accessibility check to identify potential barriers for individuals with disabilities.
59. Plan a disabilities day where friends or classmates are given a physical disability for day and are forced to function during the day.
60. Read aloud to a person who is visually impaired.
61. Build park benches.
62. Paint fences or park benches.
63. Help winterize homes in a poverty-stricken neighborhood.
64. Lend a helping hand at a local community center.
65. Identify corners where bushes and trees make it difficult for drivers to see.
66. Conduct a neighborhood drive to collect used furniture.

Performing Arts & Sports:

1. Form a band with your friends and give free concerts.
2. If you play an instrument, help a friend learn to play.
3. Serve as an usher at a sporting event.
4. Get your marital arts or dance class to give a demonstration at a youth center, nursing home or school.
5. Write and product a play about a current issue.
6. Serve as a coach for a youth sports team.
7. Teach a friend how to in-line skate.
8. Start a collection drive for old sports equipment and donate it to needy families.
9. Get friends to assist at a sporting event.
10. Provide refreshments at a local race or sporting event

The Environment:

1. Plant a garden or tree where the whole neighborhood can enjoy it.
2. Set up a recycling system for your home and participate in your neighborhood curbside recycling pick-up.
3. Organize a car pooling campaign in your neighborhood to cut down on air pollution.
4. Set up a seed or a plant exchange in your neighborhood.
5. Grow fresh flowers and deliver them to someone to brighten their day.
6. Pick up a trail during National Trail Day in June.
7. Make bird feeders for public places.
8. Collect Old phone books in your neighborhood for recycling.
9. Adopt an acre of a park or a mile of roadside to keep clean.
10. Elect a family "energy watchdog" to shut off lights, radios, and TV's when not in use.
11. Help everyone in your family conserve water.
12. Clean up trash along a river or in a park.
13. Create a habitat for wildlife.
14. Create a campaign to encourage biking and walking.
15. Test the health of the water in your local lakes, rivers or streams.
16. Got places to be? Burn energy on your bike instead of taking the family car.
17. Start a butterfly garden at home, at a community center, senior home or school.
18. Sponsor an environmental slogan contest in school.
19. Build a bluebird trail.
20. Collect aluminum cans and donate the money to a favorite charity.
21. Get together with friends and make conservation posters for the community center.
22. Encourage your parents to buy products made from recycled materials.
23. Conduct an energy audit at your school.
24. Monitor the indoor air quality.
25. Organize an asbestos check.
26. Test the drinking water for lead.
27. Adopt an acre of rainforest.
28. Plant a commemorative tree to honor someone.
29. Create a children's nature garden, labeling plants and trees and scheduling guided tours.
30. Replace trees that have died.
31. Take household toxic waste to a proper disposal facility.
32. Check indoor radon levels.
33. Adopt highways and clean up clutter.
34. Volunteer to separate recyclables.
35. Organize a hazardous waste collection.
36. Start a recycling center at school.
37. Host a recycling fair.
38. Hold an invention contest with entries made out of recycled goods.
39. Form a volunteer lawn mowing service with your friends.
40. If you see a tree that's in trouble, try to save it. Pamper it, water it, or don't water it as the case may be. Find out what's wrong with it and how to make it better.
41. Pick up litter.
42. Use a lunch box instead of throwaway bags.
43. Practice the 3 R's in your house: Reduce, recycle, reuse.
44. Adopt a park with your friends and keep it clean.
45. Bring a backpack when you shop or reuse those little plastic sacks.
46. Clean up a beach or riverbed.
47. Start a compost pile and encourage your family to use it!
48. Plant trees.
49. Plant a commemorative tree to honor someone.
50. Ask your school to use recycled paper.
51. Repair homes or abandoned buildings.
52. Start an Environmental Club.
53. Hold a recycling contest.
54. Check homes and public buildings for lead based paint.
55. Clear a new trail at a nature center or park.

Senior Citizens:

1. Adopt a "grandfriend"
2. Visit a nursing home.
3. Rake leaves, shovel snow, clean gutter or wash windows for a senior citizen.
4. Pick up medicine for an elderly person.
5. During bad weather, visit seniors to make sure they have everything they need.
6. Pick up the morning paper for a senior neighbor on your way to school.
7. Form a Mall Patrol with your friends to help seniors with their shopping.

8. Form a kids carwash squad to clean and wash seniors' cars.
9. Write your "grandfriend" a letter, or write letters for an elderly person.
10. Go for a walk with a senior citizen in your community.
11. Hold an afternoon dance for your local nursing home.
12. With the help of family and friends, hold a summertime play or songfest at a nursing home.
13. Teach them your dances and ask them to teach you theirs.
14. Deliver meals to homebound individuals.
15. Offer to pick up groceries with/for a senior citizen.
16. Help senior citizens in your neighborhood obtain and install locks or smoke alarms.
17. Teach a senior friend how to use a computer or the Internet.
18. Get a group together to sing or present a play at a nursing home.
19. Do something creative on the holidays for the Senior Citizens (cook a meal, bake cookies, dress up in costumes, etc.)
20. Take a pet to a nursing home.
21. Do art projects with people in nursing homes (Finger painting.)
22. Organize a sing-a-long.
23. Offer to read to people in a nursing home.
24. Write letters to people in a nursing home, if you can't go and visit.
25. Teach an elderly neighbor a new card game.
26. Call up elderly people who live on their own to see if they need anything.
27. Teach your senior friends how to use computers.
28. Get with friends and form a Clean Up Club to help elderly with their house cleaning.
29. Be a friend to the senior citizens.
5. Raise money for pet causes by organizing a pet photo session.
6. Organize a pet show for a local nursing home.
7. With the support of a vet clinic, organize a neuter and spay campaign to get animals neutered and spayed at a reduced rate.
8. Set up donation centers for animal products to be donated to needy.
9. Learn about pet therapy and do pet therapy with your animal at nursing homes and day care centers.
10. Form a "we love animals" club and volunteer to care for animals at a children's zoo.
11. Plan a special awareness event during *Be Kind to Animals Week* in May.
12. Organize a community dog wash.
13. Volunteer to clean out animal shelters at homeless shelter.
14. Collect and sort newspapers to donate to a local animal shelter.
15. Collect food and supplies needed for a local zoo, animal shelter or food bank.
16. Adopt a Zoo Animal.
17. Learn about pet therapy and do pet therapy at local nursing homes or child care centers.
18. Find homes in shelters for abandoned pets.
19. Talk to a Wildlife Conservationist or Game and Parks official. Check out their volunteer opportunities.
20. Clean wooden duck house before each nesting season.
21. Care for a neighbor's pet.
22. Find out about volunteer opportunities at a local wildlife sanctuary or survival center.

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The 4-H Youth Development program abides with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska—Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

These 366 Community Service Ideas were compiled by Janet Fox, former Nebraska 4-H Extension Specialist.

References and suggested resources:

- *Kid's Guide to Service Projects* by Barbara Luis
- *The Kids Can Help Book* by Susan Logan
- *1998 National Youth Service Day 10th Anniversary*
- *Youth Service Project Ideas*

Helping Animals:

1. Volunteer at an animal shelter. Help clean up, play with the animals, or do whatever's needed to make the shelter a nicer "temporary" home for the animals.
2. Become a foster parent. Some shelters have temporary foster care programs. You take care of a pet until they can find a permanent home for it.
3. Control animal populations.
4. Find out about raising a dog for persons with disabilities.

Volunteer Opportunities for Teens

Volunteering is a great way to make a difference in your community, discover a new interest, explore a possible career, network with new mentors, make friends and have fun. And social responsibility is an important part of your high school resume, even if your school doesn't require high school community service.

There are lots of teen community service opportunities that are engaging. Start with service clubs at your high school, in your community or at religious organizations (you don't always have to be a member to participate in outreach programs). Brainstorm with parents, friends, teachers and neighbors. Or, find something on our list. The important thing is to take the first step.

And once you find a cause you care about, think about how to delve into it more deeply, rather than flitting from charity to charity. You'll enjoy it more, and both future employers and colleges will appreciate that you are committed to something you care about.

Try DIY on Flextime

Having trouble finding something organized that fits your schedule? Here are 10 easy ways to get into community service on your own.

1. Search your closet to find items in good condition that you've outgrown or don't use anymore. Take them to your local Goodwill or shelter. Your school may also collect clothing or other items for needy students. Ask if the organization needs volunteers to sort or distribute donations.
2. Pick up some nonperishables to donate to your local food bank. When you drop them off, ask about volunteer opportunities.
3. Shelters, fire departments, foster parent organizations and hospitals sometimes welcome new or slightly used toys and stuffed animals. Check with the organizations first to determine their needs.
4. During the holiday season, see if local stores have lay-away plans that allow customers to pay for purchases over several weeks. Be a secret Santa and pay off someone's holiday gift balance.
5. For your next birthday, ask that people give donations to a charity of your choice instead of gifts. When you drop off the donations, ask about volunteer opportunities.
6. Send a package or cards to deployed troops, veterans, wounded soldiers or first-responders through organizations such as Operation Gratitude.
7. Create your own campaign or join one through DoSomething.org. You can choose the cause, the amount of time you have available and the type of service in which you want to participate (donations, face-to-face, events, taking a stand, etc.). For example, you can work to stop friends from texting and driving; raise awareness about domestic violence; or create activity books for children in hospitals. Volunteer on your schedule at your own pace!
8. Collect children's books and other reading materials for shelters, libraries and schools, then ask if they need volunteer readers.
9. Get involved in a civic cause. Write, call or drop by local government offices; find out when your senator or representative will hold open meetings with constituents in your district; seek out local political action committees and campaigns.
10. Offer to rake leaves, shovel the walk or do housework for someone in need. You might learn something new about a neighbor or discover a new network of connections.

Try a One-Day Test Drive

Not sure what you care about? Volunteer for an event. Nonprofits usually need to recruit lots of volunteers for a huge event like a road race or a golf tournament. You'll meet other people who are interested in the same causes as you are and learn other ways to help an organization. It's a great way to find out more before committing to a regular gig.

1. Volunteer to run/walk/ride for an event, like Race for the Cure or Relay for Life.
2. Sign up to help with registration, water stops, setup, cleanup and other administrative tasks before an event.
3. Volunteer on Thanksgiving Day (invite your whole family to participate!). See if a local shelter or community meal needs volunteers.
4. Local organizations often host holiday parties or gift giveaways for children in need. Check with shelters, foster organizations, libraries and religious organizations to see when they need volunteers or donated goods.
5. Participate in a cleanup day at a local beach, trail, waterway or park.