

# COMMUNITY SERVICE—WHY WE GIVE BACK



## BSA Reference Materials

- Journey to Excellence, [www.scouting.org/Awards/JourneyToExcellence.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Awards/JourneyToExcellence.aspx)
- Unit Tips for Success, [www.scouting.org/Awards/JourneyToExcellence/unit\\_tips.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Awards/JourneyToExcellence/unit_tips.aspx)
- Service Hours Reporting, <https://servicehours.scouting.org/UI/Security/Login.aspx>
- Boy Scout Handbook, 13th edition (No. 34554)

## What is community service?

- It is voluntary work intended to help people in a particular area.
- It's not just giving money. It is a donated service or activity (in other words, with nothing in return) performed by someone or a group of people for the benefit of the public or its institutions—usually not for personal benefit.
- It can benefit someone directly, such as raking leaves for an elderly person or the family of a deployed soldier. It can also benefit a BSA camp. (**Note:** An Eagle Scout service project has different stipulations.)
- A unit fundraising event, such as a car wash or bagging groceries at a store, is not community service because the Scouts are getting paid.

## Why do community service?

- Nothing your Scout unit can do raises community awareness more than a service project.
- These good turns are some of our best marketing tools.
- They send the message that Scouts are here, making life better for others.
- Community service is one of the activities families look for when they sign up to participate in Scouting.
- Scouting was founded on the premise of doing a Good Turn daily. Community service is very important in the character-building process and, as Scouts, we have made the commitment to give back to our communities.
- Community service projects are one the best ways to continue relationships with the community at large and organizations in particular, such as schools, local governments, and chartered organizations.
- Doing service projects together is one way that Scouts keep their promise “to help other people.” While a Scout should do his best to help other people every day, a group service project is a bigger way to help people. While you're giving service, you're learning to work together with others to do something that's good for your community.

The Scout Oath, Scout Law, and Scout slogan include commitments to community service:

- “On my honor, I will do my best ... to help other people at all times.”
- “A Scout is ... helpful, friendly, courteous, kind ...”
- “Do a Good Turn Daily.”

The BSA collects service project hours to demonstrate the value that Scouting provides to the nation. These hours are reported to the states and to Congress.

The BSA and local councils receive grants and foundation donations based on the amount of community service provided by Scouts.

## Journey to Excellence scorecards require service projects by all Scouting units.

- Journey to Excellence requires at least one annual service project to benefit each unit's chartered organization, but why stop at one per year? Ask the chartered organization what your unit can do for it. The organization's needs might change from year to year.
- Journey to Excellence requires units to record projects and hours on the service hours reporting website in order to get credit for the projects for their JTE score.

Rank advancement requires community service in most Scouting programs.

However, a Scout should **NOT** just do community service when service hours are needed for advancement.

## Who should do community service?

- All Scouts of all ages.
- Adult Scout leaders and parents: They set a good example for the Scouts to follow.
- Siblings: Some will become Scouts, and everyone should be taught this valuable ethic of helping others.

If your council or district has a planned civic service project, such as Scouting for Food, each unit should participate to the best of its abilities.

## Want to plan a service project?

The Scout Oath includes the phrase “*to help other people at all times,*” which reminds us to always be of service to others. Begin planning your project by discussing various service ideas with your Scouts. Adult leaders, your chartered organization, and the local government are also good resources for ideas. Projects will be more meaningful and fun if they are well-planned.

Your service project should:

- **Be significant.** The project should be something important. When it’s done, everyone should be able to look back with satisfaction on an effort that has made a difference in your community.
- **Be democratic.** Scouts are more likely to buy into the project if they have taken an active part in selecting, planning, and organizing it.
- **Be clearly defined.** A project must have definite beginning and end points, with logical steps in between. A clear goal allows everyone to measure the progress along the way, and increases everyone’s sense of participation and pride in a job well done.
- **Be prepared well.** This begins long before the project starts. Ask these questions: What is the project’s purpose? Who should be contacted as resources? How many Scouts must be involved to complete the work in the allotted time? What tools or resources are needed? What safety issues must be addressed?
- **Be promoted.** Promote the project within your community. This will not only provide additional workers, but will increase the visibility of Scouting and the impact it has on your community. Create a yard sign that says “Pack/Troop/Team/Post/Group No. \_\_\_\_ Service Project” or “Scouting Supports Our Community.”
- **Include reflection.** When the project is complete, spend 10 or 15 minutes discussing it. At the end of your project, a discussion will help make the experience meaningful to all of those involved. This last step is important to help the Scouts realize the impact they can have in the world by volunteering and participating in community service projects.

## Ideas for Community Service

- Toys for Tots
- Scouting for Food
- Adopt-A-Highway
- Fundraising for community equipment purchases
- Collection of:
  - Clothing: coats, socks, gloves, hats
  - cell phones
  - eye glasses
  - books, games, toys
  - toiletries
- Computer lessons
- Nursing home visits
- Habitat for Humanity
- Community flag ceremonies
- Roadkill cleanup, birds, etc.
- Disaster relief project
- American Cancer Society Relay for Life
- Setup, teardown and support for community events such as:
  - Blood drive
  - Art Fair
  - Farmers Market
  - Street Sale
  - Ice Cream Social
- Conservation projects such as:
  - removing invasive plant species
  - installing/refurbishing trails, signs, fences
  - planting trees, shrubs, flowers
- Charity Walk/Run
- Soup kitchen
- Helping Hands – yard maintenance for seniors