

Goal for the Month:

Have a great summer learning and serving in your community!

**Community
Service and
Learning Too!**

Ideas for Children and Youth:

Work on your math skills while you help count and sort donated cans of food at the food bank! Not enough food to count? Host a food drive in your neighborhood and raise awareness about the needs of the local food bank! Here are a few items that food banks don't normally receive that they could really use:

- Peanut Butter & Jelly
- Laundry Detergent
- Cat & Dog Food
- Toilet Paper, Paper Towels & Napkins
- Household Cleaning Items (Pine Sol, Clorox, Windex, Mr. Clean, etc.)
- Rice & Dried Pasta
- Jars of Pasta Sauce
- Diapers & Baby Wipes
- Shampoo & Soap

Collect Coupons

Collecting food isn't the only way you can help the food bank. Collect coupons from the Sunday paper and organize them by category. File them in a recipe box so that people at the food bank can easily find the coupons that they need. Want to collect and cut even more coupons? Ask the local grocery stores to save coupon sections from the Sunday papers that aren't sold and donate them to you for your project!

Become a better reader by becoming involved in service projects at the local library.

There are lots of ways that you can help out the library! Here are a few ideas:

- Decorate a bulletin board with a theme and highlight children's books that develop the chosen themes! Community, Patriotism, Good Neighbors and Volunteerism would be great summer themes!
- Help out with the daily story hour by either reading books to younger children or organizing craft activities that promote the themes of the books read during story hour!
- Organize a book group for children your age to get together over the summer and read about books and do service projects for the library!
- Write book reviews of books that you have read and really liked! Post these book reviews on a bulletin board at the library or make copies of your book reviews and ask the librarian to display them so that other kids your age can learn more about the books you've enjoyed and maybe even read some of them!



Explore science, ecology and the environment while helping an elderly neighbor take care of his/her vegetable and/or flower gardens! For some senior citizens even weeding a garden can be a real challenge. You can provide an extra pair of hands and much needed company for some folks! Here are a few ways to make your gardening partnership even more exciting:

If your neighbor was or is involved in a garden club, you might really learn a lot about plants and how to take care of them! As you plant and weed the garden side by side with the neighbor you are helping, ask questions about the plants and how best to care for them. Take notes so that you can share what you learn with your family. You can help your family to either improve the garden you already have or start one from scratch as a family project!

Take pictures of the garden before and after you begin helping out so that you can see just how much you really did help! Also, take pictures of your neighbor while they are gardening and have a friend or someone from your family take a picture of you and your neighbor gardening together. At the end of the summer, create a scrap book with photos and notes of how you felt about partnering with your neighbor to learn about gardening.

Community Garden

Did you know that there are a lot of nutrition lessons in a vegetable garden? Well, there are! Get together a group of friends and plant a community garden. Contact the local mayor's office and find out where you can plant a vegetable garden. Remember, you need a water source nearby! Research nutritious vegetables that you can grow so that the produce your garden yields will help a hungry family in the community get their five to seven servings of fruits and vegetables!

Lend a hand at the animal shelter and improve your technology skills! Summer is a time for kittens and puppies and your local animal shelter probably has a lot of furry friends that are waiting to be adopted. Help the adoption effort by creating a website for the animal shelter! Take pictures of all the cats and dogs available for adoption and post them on the website! Research and post information about why it is important to spay and neuter dogs and cats, as well as information about upcoming rabies clinics. In between creating the website and snapping fun pictures of the pets, grab a leash and take a dog or two for a walk in the local park!



Local War Memorial

Learn more about patriotism and community by helping maintain a local war memorial. If there is a war memorial in your community, find out who is in charge of maintaining it. If no one is in charge and it looks like it could use some sprucing up, go through the appropriate channels (mayor's office, local VFW, etc.) and see if you can adopt the war memorial, at least for the summer. Plant a memorial garden full of beautiful perennials! Plant some annuals! Ask a local garden store to donate the plants! Research the soldiers who are named on the memorial and find out if any of their relatives are still living in the community. Host a memorial ceremony and invite these relatives and the whole community to attend and bring a plant to donate! After the summer is over and you get busy again with school, find out if a local school would like to adopt the war memorial for fall and spring maintenance.

Tips for Parents:

Service-learning is all about taking community service activities and using them as a vehicle for learning and character development. If service-learning were taking place at school, the community service activities would be integrated into the academic curriculum. Service-learning can also take place at home or in the community with family and friends. That is what the above projects are designed for and we hope you utilize some of these ideas during July so that your child learns what it means to become Involved!

In order to help make the service-learning experiences become more beneficial to your child, reflection will be very important. Reflect and discuss about the experience with your son or daughter before, during and after the service-learning activities take place. Keep their reflection notes in a scrap book or simple portfolio so that they can refer to it later and remember the experiences.

To help make the reflection process easier for you, we've come up with some reflection ideas that involve writing, reading, creating, listening and discussing:

Writing

Have your child write a poem about their project or an issue related to their project (food bank = hunger, reading = literacy, gardening = ecology, etc.).

Have your child write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper about an issue related to their project (food bank = hunger, reading = literacy, gardening = ecology, etc.).

Keeping a journal of thoughts and feelings that come up during the service-learning experience can be a great way to promote creative writing! Encourage your child to write in their journal before, during and after the service-learning activities they participate in!

If someone has helped your child with their project, make sure your child writes him or her a **thank you note!**

Reading

Take your child to the library and help them find books to read that will help them learn more about an issue related to their project (food bank = hunger, reading = literacy, gardening = ecology, etc.).

If you are trying to help your child gain a better understanding of community, the best place to start is sometimes the local newspaper! Make a point each day to look through the local newspaper **with your son or daughter** to find out what is going on (both good and bad!) in your local community. Discuss your findings and allow your child to reflect about what they like or dislike about what they discover through the newspaper!

Creating

A scrap book can be a great way to boost your child's self worth by documenting and reflecting upon his/her experiences. Help your child start a service scrapbook to document all the experiences related to their service-learning summer!

A digital camera is easy to use and kids love the instant gratification of seeing photos right after they are taken. Have your son or daughter document all their community activities with a digital camera. At the end of the summer, they can create a power point presentation and give a report about their experiences to family, friends and neighbors!

They can also create a website!

Since it is very important to thank anyone and everyone who helped your child with his or her service-learning project, your child can create thank you cards with desk top publishing software! Don't have a computer or desk top publishing software? Crayons, markers and paper will do the trick!



Listening & Discussing

Have your child interview someone whose efforts in the community help to further an issue related to your child's service-learning project (food bank employee = hunger, reading = librarian, gardening = Master Gardener, etc.). Prior to the interview, help them come up with a list of questions that they can ask. After the interview, discuss the responses to the questions with your child and relate what they learned from the interview back to their project.

Keep in Touch!

Before, during and after your child's service-learning project, touch base with him/her and find out how the project is going. Does he/she need some help? Are things going as planned? What are they learning that they are excited about? What don't they like about their project? The more you discuss the more they will reflect!

Turning Caring Actions Into Caring Habits...One Month at a Time



305 Furnace Drive Suite B
Zelienople, PA 16063
724.453.0447 Fax: 724.453.8090
www.caringhabits.org