



Westborough Service Learning Initiative

Family Guide

Our “Why”

We believe that service to others can be an incredible tool for learning and character development. Service teaches thoughtfulness, a variety of communication styles, and complex problem-solving skills. Our program is centered on the belief that service empowers young people to become engaged in their communities, grow confidence in themselves, and leverage their creativity.

Parents play an irreplaceable role in shaping the next generation into the leaders they will become; it is our hope to support those who wish to make service a part of their children's lives. Whether your family likes to keep busy or more often opts for some quality quiet time at home, service can be a grounding force which brings everyone together -- and can be incorporated into any family structure or life style!

If you have any questions, would like to chat more about how to make service work for your family, or would like to share what your family's done to give back, we'd love to hear from you with any questions or feedback! (westboroughservicelearning@gmail.com)

How to use our resources:

We've created the Westborough Service-Learning Website to house some of our resources for students to access independently:

- The Service Cycle is the foundation of our curriculum, and a self-guided version is available for students and groups to use independently of our workshops. If you or your child is interested in leading a service project or making an impact towards a problem in our community, this page can help guide the process of designing and leading a project. Of course, you know your child best, and this can be adapted to meet your child wherever they are skill wise!
- The guides are intended to help students communicate to others about their project and might be helpful for the advertising portions of a service project
- Our Service Organizations Database can help guide the process of researching an organization or a cause to serve. The database is made up of organizations we're in contact with & have worked with in some capacity
- We've provided a list of 15 different service ideas specifically for families (on this guide) that could be a starting point for an at home service-learning project



A Collection of 15 Service Ideas for any family, any time:

Weeknight Projects:

- (1) Making cards for those who could use a pick me up. (This could be tailored to almost any service interest, from our military serving overseas to the writing thank you notes to volunteers at a local animal hospital)
- (2) Donate a “meal,” by checking your cabinet for anything you could donate to a foodbank, then look for a fun recipes that someone could make with those ingredients - have the kids write out how to make the dish and send the recipe with the donations.

Weekend Projects:

- (3) Head to a park and pick up any trash you find (with gloves if necessary!) This is a great chance to get your kids outside in the sun too!
- (4) If you know of a family in your neighborhood who needs a night off, help to prepare a dinner for them & offer to babysit for a few hours
- (5) Plant flowers or weed an area at a local park or in the neighborhood
- (6) Plan a trip to volunteer at a local shelter to help care for the animals or to take some of the dogs out for a walk (often you can sign up for specific tasks on their website)
- (7) Make a batch of cookies or brownies and drop them off with a thank you note to a local fire station or police department
- (8) Write out kind or inspirational saying and leave them in the mailboxes of a few neighbors
- (9) Create a thank you note or small gift of gratitude for your child’s teachers
- (10) Put together coffee, tea, or hot chocolate mix for local workers who make a difference in your community, such as nurses, firefighters, or police officers.

Couple of days or longer:

- (11) Put together a donation pile of clothing, toys, or school supplies
- (12) Connect with a family or school in another part of the world, and go “back-to-school” shopping for some students/children there
- (13) Design a random acts of kindness day for your neighborhood or within your family
- (14) Make cards to give to a home for the elderly or volunteer at a senior center
- (15) Sponsor an animal at the zoo by holding a yard sale or fundraiser



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A few notes:

Service as often be a tricky topic when explaining to your young ones, so if you are looking for a little direction (and many parents are!) here are some things you may want to keep in mind:

- Being mindful of terminology often makes a big difference. Talking to your child about what they can learn from those you are serving will help them develop a sense that they are not serving because their way of life is better than anyone else's, but rather that everyone has something to learn from different ways of life.
- Waiting until your child is ready to serve often makes the service more impactful. Parents know that all children develop their understanding of the world at their own pace; parents are also often the best gauge of if a child's excited about what their doing or not, so don't be afraid to hold off until you know your child is ready to be excited about service!
- Keeping things light is great idea. Parents know best what little things (whether it's an ice cream or a chance to draw with sparkle crayons) will make their child light up, don't hesitate to take these resources and tweak them to give your child the best experience around service that they can have!

Supporting your child's project:

You might have kids who fall in love with service and may even want to design their own project, while their infinite creativity can lead to amazing new ideas, it's very likely they'll need some support along the way. The resources here can give them guidance and a place to start, however, we also know that parents and supportive adults serve as the mentors who really make projects come to life. If your children have an idea for a project, they might want to do it independently and will very often need some guidance through challenging steps!

We'd love hear from you!

We'd love to support you and your family in the most meaningful ways possible! Please reach out to us if you have any questions or feedback - we'd love to grow our program in a way that is truly valuable to our incredible Westborough Community!!