

# ZOOM Into Action™



We garden at a housing development.

## Family Guide to Volunteering

We spend time at a nursing home.



We ride our bikes to raise money.



KIDS



Dear Family,

All across America, families like yours are volunteering. They are collecting food for shelters, helping their elderly neighbors run errands, and working with other families to clean local parks. Whatever the activity, these families are showing that they care about their communities.

Now it's your chance to ZOOM Into Action™ and get involved! ZOOM Into Action is a multimedia campaign that motivates kids to volunteer. We have created this guide to help you learn more about how families with young children can volunteer together. Inside you will find ideas for projects and suggestions for how to make your volunteer experience fun and rewarding for your whole family.

Choose a project and get started. Then share your volunteering story with ZOOM. Every day on the TV show and Web site, ZOOM honors young volunteers. No matter how big or small your volunteer activity, your family and families like yours across the nation are making a big difference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Taylor  
Executive Producer  
ZOOM

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# What's Family Volunteering?

## Who Is a Volunteer?

You are! A volunteer is anyone who spends time helping a person, a place, or an organization. Volunteers come in many shapes and sizes. Family members who check in on an elderly neighbor every day are volunteers. A parent who coaches her son's soccer team every week is a volunteer. And a child who collects canned goods at Thanksgiving is a volunteer. All of these volunteers have one thing in common—they give their time to help care for their communities.

## Why Volunteer as a Family?

No matter who is in your family—stepchildren and stepparents, grandparent and grandson, father and daughter—volunteering gives your family a chance to work together toward a common purpose. From choosing an activity to planning the details and making it happen, family members take part in the experience together.

Family volunteering provides many benefits, including:

- teaching kids the importance of caring for others,
- giving adults the opportunity to be positive role models,
- providing your family with new skills,
- introducing your family to new people in the community,
- building a stronger family unit by developing shared memories,
- and making the community a better place for everyone.



The Cabrera family volunteered at a nursing home where they met a couple from the same hometown in Cuba!

What is ZOOM?  
ZOOM is a daily PBS television show that motivates kids to become actively involved with the world. Check local listings to find out when ZOOM is on in your area, and visit the Web site at [pbskids.org/zoom](http://pbskids.org/zoom)



## ZOOM Into Action

ZOOM Into Action is a multimedia campaign that motivates kids to volunteer. The ZOOM Into Action Web feature at [pbskids.org/zoom/action](http://pbskids.org/zoom/action) is full of great ideas for volunteer projects, volunteer success stories sent in by kids, and printable signs and certificates to ZOOMify your efforts. We want your family to ZOOM Into Action! Then share your volunteer story with ZOOM by filling out the Share Your Story form on page 7. You may see your story on the Web site or TV show.

## America's Families Make a Difference

So far, thousands of kids and their families from across the country have volunteered through ZOOM Into Action, and the number keeps growing. Here are some of their stories:

- Julia L. asked guests at her birthday party to bring donations for a food pantry.
- Greg G. and his dad took part in a bike-a-thon to raise money for Bikes-Not-Bombs, an organization that collects old bikes, fixes them up, and donates them to people who can't afford them. The father and son team biked 25 miles and raised \$4,900.
- Alexandra W. volunteers with her family every week at a farm. She helps groom, feed, and saddle the horses.



Here's Greg G. and his dad before their ride.

# 1 Choose a Project

The first step is to choose a volunteer project that fits your family's needs.

## Get together.

Find a time when your family can get together to talk about project ideas. The planning stage is an important part of the volunteer process, so make sure that everyone feels involved.

## Brainstorm a list of the people or organizations you would like to help.

What kinds of things do you like to do? Do you like to be outdoors, spend time with animals, collect things? What are you good at? Do you enjoy teaching other people or working with your hands? Is there a particular cause you feel passionate about, such as feeding homeless people, helping animals, or protecting the rain forest?

## Talk about how much free time you have to volunteer.

It could be once a week, once a month, or once a year. Start with a one-time project. You may want to try out a variety of organizations before you commit to one on an ongoing basis.

## Find a project that meets your needs.

Many organizations welcome family volunteers. Turn to page 13 to find Web sites that list family-friendly volunteering opportunities. If you have a cause you feel passionate about and cannot find a related organization, you can start your own project. For examples of projects you can do on your own, turn to pages 9 to 11.

## Contact an organization.

Ask the volunteer coordinator at the organization about projects for families. Let the coordinator know the number of adults who will be coming and the number and ages of children. Find out about the project—who it helps, if any special skills are required, and what you should do to prepare.

Plan your time well. Begin with a short project of one to two hours. Then extend the time involved depending on your children's ages and interests.

Find a Project Online  
Visit the ZOOM Into Action  
Web site at  
[pbskids.org/zoom/action](http://pbskids.org/zoom/action) for  
more project ideas.



### Share Stories with Your Family

One of the best ways to introduce kids to an issue, such as homelessness or pollution, is through a story. By sharing stories, you can learn about the problems people face and how your family can help by volunteering. Turn to page 12 for examples of books that are appropriate for kids.

## 2 Get Ready

The key to a successful volunteer project is being prepared.

### Prepare through conversation.

Talk with your family about what it means to help someone. Were there times when other people helped you? What made you feel good about being helped? Remember that helping works in both directions—everyone gains something, including you, the volunteer.

### Discuss how others are helping.

Talk with your family about the many people who dedicate their time as volunteers. Share newspaper articles about people in your community who help others.

### Collect supplies.

Think about what you will need for your project. Bring work gloves or an apron if you think you'll get messy; boxes or garbage bags if you'll be collecting things.

### Get in the know.

Learn about the group you are helping. Understanding the people or place you are trying to help will make the project more meaningful. (See page 12 for examples of books that are appropriate for kids.)



Gina C. and her mom collected buckets, scrapers, and sponges and cleaned a bus shelter in their neighborhood. Here they are in front of the clean shelter!

Getting a busy signal? Volunteer coordinators are often busy, so you may not be able to reach them on your first try. Be persistent and keep calling. They want to hear from you!

# 3 Volunteer!

The moment you have been waiting for has arrived. It's time to ZOOM Into Action!

## Be prepared.

Bring any supplies you have gathered and arrive at your project site promptly so the volunteer coordinator has time to give you instructions.

## Include everyone.

Make sure that everyone in your family has a task so they all feel involved in the project.

## Bring snacks.

The project site may not have food available.

## Take breaks.

If your family gets tired, you might want to take a break. Staying through the end of the project is important, but it may be more important to leave while your family is still enthusiastic so they will want to volunteer again.

## Check in.

During the experience, check in with your family members by asking what they notice or how they are feeling. Share your own thoughts, ideas, and emotions.



Chris O. helped build a bench and set up drink coolers for thirsty volunteers at a Habitat for Humanity project. The volunteers were building a house for a family that needed one.

Imagine . . .  
being on the other side.  
What would it feel like  
to be the person being  
helped? How would it  
feel to be in his or  
her shoes?

## Safety Tips

Here are some smart volunteering tips to discuss with your family before you start any project.

**Listen.** If you volunteer for a group or an organization, follow the directions the leader gives you. Ask questions if something is confusing.

**Be careful.** Tell your kids it is OK to say "no" if someone asks them to do something that seems wrong or scary. Assure them you will always be nearby.

**Stay together.** Find a way to work together so adult family members can supervise kids.

**Be informed.** Make sure you know about additional safety concerns that may be specific to your community and project.

## 4 Reflect

### Give thanks.

Remember to thank people who helped make your volunteer experience a success. Thank the volunteer coordinator for organizing the project. Or, if you started your own project, remember to thank your volunteers. Thank your family members for working with you and also thank yourself.

After you volunteer, gather the family together to reflect on your volunteer experience.

Reflection gives you a chance to describe what happened as a volunteer, to express your thoughts and feelings, and to connect your experience to the larger world.

### Make a “helping hand” poster.

Trace one of your hands on a large piece of paper. Write something you learned on each finger and how you helped on the palm. Decorate the hand and hang it on your refrigerator.



### Have a discussion:

- Who did we help?
- What did we see and hear?
- How did we feel?
- What did we learn that we did not know before?
- What new questions or ideas do we have?
- Is there anything we would do differently next time?

### Start a family volunteering album.

On a piece of paper, record what you did, how you felt, and what you learned. Add drawings, photos, and special memories. Make a new page for each new way your family volunteers together.

### Keep reading.

After a volunteering experience is a good time to read books that relate to your activity. This can encourage discussion and inspire future participation.

### Share Your Story with ZOOM

While your volunteer experience is still fresh in your mind, take a moment to fill out the Share Your Story form on the next page.

# 5 Share Your Story



We want to know all about your volunteer project.

Copy this form, fill it out, and send it to ZOOM. If you have photos, drawings, a video, or news clippings, send those, too. And don't forget to have an adult sign the form before you drop it in the mail.

Send your story to:  
ZOOM Into Action  
Box 350  
Boston, MA 02134

I'm volunteering for

---

---

How I'm helping

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> people who are sick      | <input type="radio"/> animals       |
| <input type="radio"/> people with disabilities | <input type="radio"/> seniors       |
| <input type="radio"/> the environment          | <input type="radio"/> other kids    |
| <input type="radio"/> people who are homeless  | <input type="radio"/> to end hunger |
| <input type="radio"/> in my neighborhood       | <input type="radio"/> my country    |
| <input type="radio"/> at home or at school     | <input type="radio"/> the world     |
| <input type="radio"/> other:                   |                                     |
- 

Who volunteers with me

- I work alone.
- my family
- my friends
- a group: (Tell us who they are.)
- 

How often I volunteer

- once a week
- once a month
- a few times a week
- once a year
- other:
- 

Answer these questions here or on another sheet of paper.

## Adult Permission

(Ask a parent or legal guardian to read and sign below.) I have reviewed my child's submission and we both understand that all submissions become the property of ZOOM and my local PBS station and will be eligible for inclusion in all ZOOMmedia. This means that ZOOM can share our ideas with other ZOOMers on TV, the Web, in print materials, and in other media.

I give permission for ZOOM to contact me and my child in the event that ZOOM needs further information.

Name (please print)

---

---

Signature

---

Relationship

---

Date

Phone

---

## Tell Us About Yourself

First Name

---

Last Name

---

Street

---

City

---

State

Zip

---

Age

---

Phone

---

---

How did you get the idea?

What steps did you take?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What was the result? (Give us some numbers like, you washed 7 cars, you raised \$50, you made 1 person smile.)

What's the coolest thing that happened while you were volunteering?

## 6 Keep Helping

Make volunteering an ongoing family activity. You might continue with the same project or try a new one. Here are some ways you can keep volunteering:

Turn family birthday parties into celebrations of giving. Ask your guests to bring pet supplies for an animal shelter or toys for an organization that gives gifts to kids.

Make repeat visits. Once a month visit a senior citizen center or daycare and bring cupcakes.



When the Busby family was looking for a way to volunteer together, they found a book drive listed on the United Way Web site. The whole family pitched in to collect money, shop for books, and wrap the presents. They enjoyed the experience so much that they made the book drive an annual family tradition.

Start family traditions, like serving meals at a soup kitchen at Thanksgiving or planting a tree every Earth Day.

Set aside one day a month to take part in a volunteer project. Give everyone in your family a chance to choose a project.

Take part in National Family Volunteer Day. Every November, the Points of Light Foundation sponsors a day to encourage families across the country to get involved in volunteering. To take part, call 1-800-VOLUNTEER.

## Project Spotlight: Adopt a Grandfriend

Does your family know an older person who may be lonely or need help with daily chores? You can help by making a new friend—a grandfriend. A grandfriend is a senior citizen your family visits one or more times a month.

Here's how you can "adopt" a grandfriend:

### Find an elderly person to visit.

You may know someone in your neighborhood. Or you can contact a nursing home by looking in the Yellow Pages under "Nursing Home." Kids should be accompanied by an adult when they visit their grandfriend.

### Plan your first visit.

Think about things you want to talk about and some questions to ask your grandfriend. Keep questions general and open-ended. As you get to know your grandfriend, he or she may feel more comfortable sharing stories about his or her own life.

Here are some questions you can ask your grandfriend:

- What was life like when you were a child?
- What is your favorite holiday?
- What kinds of things have you enjoyed doing with your family?

### Visit again.

When your family visits your grandfriend on a regular basis, like once a week or every two weeks, you will find more ways to help. Your grandfriend may need help shopping or running errands, raking leaves, or making dinner. Spending time reading aloud, playing cards, or just talking are other good ideas.



### Make a memory box!

Fill a shoebox with some of your favorite things and share them with your grandfriend. Ask what your grandfriend would put in a memory box if he or she were to make one.



Kira M. has a grandfriend, a woman named Mildred who is partially blind. Every other week Kira and her mom drive Mildred to the grocery store, where they help her pick out fresh fruits and vegetables. Then they all go out for ice cream!

## Project Spotlight: Pet Party

Does your family love animals? Do you want to do something to help animals at a local shelter? Here's a really fun way to help out while having a party—a pet party! A pet party is a party where your guests bring food or supplies for an animal shelter instead of presents.

Here's how to plan a pet party.

**Choose a party date.**

You can have the party on a family member's birthday, or you can pick another day, like the anniversary of the day you got your dog.

**Find an animal shelter.**

You can find a nearby shelter by looking in the Yellow Pages under "Animal Shelter." Call the Volunteer Coordinator and ask:

- What kinds of animals do you take care of?
- What types of pet supplies do you need?

**Then, get ready to party!**

Visit the ZOOM Web site at [pbskids.org/zoom](http://pbskids.org/zoom) to find animal games (like Poor Kitty) and animal food (like Zebra Cake) for your party. Print ZOOM invitations for your guests. Explain what a "pet party" is and suggest pet supplies to bring. Make paper crowns for your pets so they can be the center of attention at your pet party.

**Drop off the pet supplies.**

Take the supplies to the animal shelter after your guests leave. You may want to find out if the shelter needs help walking or caring for the animals. Maybe your family can visit the animals on a regular basis.



Read ...  
*A Day at the Wood  
Green Animal Shelter* by  
Patricia Casey to find  
out how volunteers  
help animals.



Casey H. had a puppy and kitty party for her birthday. Instead of bringing presents, her guests brought pet supplies for a local animal shelter.

## Project Spotlight: Penny Drive

Your family may want to help an organization that is far away or that doesn't have hands-on volunteer opportunities. If you want to help conserve rainforest land, for instance, one thing you can do is raise money by holding a penny drive.

Here's how to start your own penny drive:

### First, make a plan.

How much money do you want to collect? Set a timeline—will you collect pennies over a few days or several weeks? Where will you put your penny collection jars?

### Gather supplies.

You'll need containers for collecting the pennies. Plastic jars and coffee cans with plastic lids work well. Make sure the collection jars aren't too big because pennies can weigh a lot. Two thousand pennies (\$20) weigh about ten pounds! You'll also need wrappers to roll the pennies in. You can get these at a bank.

### Get the word out.

Post flyers that say when you're having the penny drive and where people can bring their pennies. Also explain how the money will be used.

### Start collecting.

Put the penny collection jars in places that are easy for people to find. If the jars will stay out for more than a day, empty the pennies each day in a safe place. That way the jars won't "walk away"! Each family member can be responsible for his or her own jars.

### Organize the pennies.

When you're done collecting, count the pennies and put them in wrappers. Then bring the wrapped pennies to a bank where you can exchange them for dollar bills or a bank check. Give the money directly to the organization of your choice or use the money to buy things that the organization needs.



Emily T. saw a segment on ZOOM about a penny drive and wanted to have one of her own. She decorated a coffee can and asked neighbors and family members to donate money for Toys for Tots.



### Make penny jar labels.

Go to [pbskids.org/zoom/freeloads/printables/pennydrive.html](https://pbskids.org/zoom/freeloads/printables/pennydrive.html) to find ZOOMy labels for your penny jars.





# Stories to Share

Reading books about different volunteering topics can help family members talk about their own ideas, concerns, and questions.

Here are some questions to help spark conversation:

- *What do we have in common with the characters in the book?*
- *How are the characters helping others?*
- *What questions do we have after reading the book?*
- *What can we do to help in our community?*

Adapted from *The Service Learning Bookshelf: A Bibliography of Fiction & Nonfiction to Inspire Student Learning and Action* by Cathryn Berger Kaye, published by ABCD Books, Los Angeles, California, 1999.

## Help Animals



*Ducks Disappearing*  
Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.  
*Willie figures out why the ducks are disappearing and helps adults understand that the ducks belong to everyone.*  
(Grades K–2)

*Nights of the Pufflings*  
McMillan, Bruce. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.  
*The children on Heimaey Island in Iceland help pufflings make their way toward the open sea.*  
(Grades K–4)

## Help People Who are Hungry or Homeless



*The Can-Do Thanksgiving*  
Pomeranc, Marion Hess. Morton Grove, IL.: Albert Whitman, 1998.  
*A young girl wonders what happens to her can of peas after she brings it to a food drive. Her questioning leads to a class project to make and serve food to people in need at Thanksgiving.*  
(Grades K–2)

*Home Is Where We Live: Life at a Shelter through a Young Girl's Eyes*  
Hertensten, Jane. Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1995.  
*A ten-year-old girl shares her feelings about living at a shelter where many other families also stay.*  
(Grades K–3)

## Help People Who are Sick



*When Someone Is Very Sick*  
Boulden, Jim. Santa Rosa, CA: Boulden Publishing, 1995.  
*Learn about the feelings you may experience if a family member or friend becomes seriously ill.*  
(Grades 4–6)

*You Can Call Me Willy: A Story for Children about AIDS*  
Verniero, Joan. New York: Magination Press, 1995.  
*A young girl with AIDS talks about her life with AIDS and the loving family and friends who care for her.*  
(Grades K–2)

## Help People with Disabilities



*Be Good to Eddie Lee*  
Fleming, Virginia. New York: Philomel Books, 1993.  
*Christie learns about friendship from Eddie Lee, her neighbor who has Down's Syndrome.*  
(Grades K–2)

*How It Feels to Live with a Physical Disability*  
Kremetz, Jill. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.  
*Children ages six to sixteen explain what it is like to have a variety of disabilities.*  
(Grades 5–8)

## Help the Environment



*Fernando's Gift*  
Keister, Douglas. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books for Children, 1995.

*You can read this book in English and Spanish. Find out what Fernando and Carmina, children who live in the rainforest of Costa Rica, do when Carmina's favorite tree is cut down.*  
(Grades K–3)

*Kid Heroes of the Environment: Simple Things Real Kids Are Doing to Save the Earth*  
Dee, Catherine, ed. Berkeley, CA: Earth Works Press, 1991.  
*Read about what kids across the country are doing to help the environment. Get contact information for environmental organizations.*  
(Grades 4–6)

## Help Seniors



How Does It Feel to Be Old?

Farber, Norma. New York: Dutton, 1979.

*A grandmother tells her granddaughter what it is like to grow old.*

(Grades 2–6)

The War with Grandpa Smith, Robert Kimmel. New York: Delacorte Press, 1984.

*Peter has to give up his room when his grandfather moves in. At first Peter is very upset, but he comes to understand the importance of family.*

(Grades 3–6)

## Help in Your Neighborhood



The Kids' Volunteering Book

Erlbach, Arlene. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company, 1998.

*Meet dozens of kids who are volunteering and learn how to start your own volunteer project.*

(Grades 4–8)

Something Beautiful Wyeth, Sharon Dennis. New York: Doubleday, 1998.

*When a little girl searches in her neighborhood for "something beautiful," she finds that through her actions and sense of community, "something beautiful" can happen.*

(Grades K–2)

## Help Kids



Amber on the Mountain Johnston, Tony. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1994.

*Amber lives in the mountains, far from any schools. A man comes to build a road, and his daughter teaches Amber to read.*

(Grades K–2)

Generation Fix: Young Ideas for a Better World

Rusch, Elizabeth. Hillsboro, Oregon: Beyond Words Publishing, 2002.

*Features 20 young volunteers and tells how they have contributed to issues such as peace, hunger, and health. One volunteer has been donating thousands of backpacks with school supplies to children in his community.*

(Grades 5–8)

## Additional Resources

### Champions of Hope

[www.championsofhope.org](http://www.championsofhope.org)  
Kids from across the country can join any one of five service projects in remembrance of September 11.

### Family Cares

[www.familycares.org](http://www.familycares.org)  
Discover over 60 hands-on family volunteering projects.

### United Way

[www.unitedway.org](http://www.unitedway.org)  
Find your local United Way and ask about family-friendly volunteering opportunities in your area.

### Volunteer Center National Network

[www.volunteerconnections.org/VCP\\_volunteercentermap.cfm](http://www.volunteerconnections.org/VCP_volunteercentermap.cfm)

Click on a state to locate a Volunteer Center near you and learn about projects that are appropriate for kids.

### Volunteering with Your Family

[www.idealists.org/kat/familyvolunteer.html](http://www.idealists.org/kat/familyvolunteer.html)  
Read about the benefits of family volunteering and search a database of family volunteering opportunities.

### Youth Service America

[www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org)  
Take part in National Youth Service Day, held every April.

C'mon and  
ZOOM Into Action!



Look inside  
to learn how your  
family can volunteer  
together.



## Credits

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