

Service Ideas:

Here are some service ideas that you might be able to use at your school. When possible, a website is listed to help in your research.

- Locker clean out is a program to encourage students to donate used, but usable school supplies at the end of the school year when they clean out their lockers, book bags, and/or desks. At the same time, it is an opportunity to educate students about recycling. The locker clean-out program serves two functions. First, it collects unneeded, but still usable school supplies (pens, pencils, crayons, note paper, glue, rulers, notebooks, etc.) that will be donated to disadvantaged children. Second, along with promoting community action, the locker clean-out project saves money by reducing disposal costs while also reducing waste in our community landfills. Donate to a shelter, rescue mission, or collect, sort, and have a “free store” in your cafeteria one evening where parents/students can come and pick up items that they need. (This is a great end-of-the-year project!)
- Car Wash for Charity - Middle school kids can also choose to wash cars for charity. They can charge much less compared to the prices of big car wash companies. The money can then go to different charity foundations and organizations.
- Care for Animals at a Shelter - Cats and dogs at an animal shelter often don't get the care they need. You can volunteer to help take care of these animals. You can help feed the animals and give them a bath. If the veterinarian is giving vaccines you can help with the paperwork or hold the animals.



- Make Cards for the Elderly - People at retirement homes can get lonely and sad, especially when their friends and family don't visit them often. Remind the elderly that the world hasn't forgotten about them. You can make cards and give them in person. Even an act as simple as this can put a smile on their faces.
- Donate Old Clothes - The homeless and the poor do not have the luxury of buying new clothes. You can help out by donating any of your old clothes and starting a donation drive at school. As a matter of fact, donation drives are among the most common service projects for middle school kids. Instead of donating canned food, which some charity groups don't like, you can give out clothes.
- Launch a Recycling Competition - Recycling competitions can help clean the environment. Recycling also creates an opportunity for students to make new, useful things. The competition will be a good means of motivating the students too. The school can then sell the best of the recycled products and the money can go to other charity causes.
- Habitat for Humanity - Even middle school students can volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. Students can help build the homes or they can help gather donations. Habitat for Humanity needs a lot of materials and tools. If you can't join in the construction work you can still go house-to-house to gather nails, screws, and other materials.
- Neighborhood Cleanup – organize an afternoon to clean up the neighborhood. You can start with raking the leaves in your neighbor's yard. If the whole school gets involved, the students can go to the park and spend an entire afternoon cleaning. You can even tie this activity to the recycling event.
- Visiting a Nursing Hospital - Nursing homes can be lonely and miserable. You can brighten the day of someone, even for only a short period, by visiting him or her. You can put on a show like a music show or a talent show. Other students can help the residents by reading or just talking with them.



- Volunteer at a Soup Kitchen - Soup kitchens feed the poor and the homeless. You can volunteer to help distribute the food. This is especially helpful on busy days with a lot of people. If some of the students know how to cook then they can help out in the kitchen area too. Students can prepare the food, cook the food, and wash the dishes.



- Join a Tree-Planting Event - Protecting the environment and fighting climate change is important. Students can take part in joining tree-planting events. Some of these events involve planting seeds on newly plowed soil. Others involve transferring young saplings. Planting trees can also promote renewable energy sources and recycling too. (Contact the Chesapeake Bay Foundation <http://www.cbf.org/>)

- Make Care Kits for the Homeless - Homeless people often cannot afford some of the amenities people take for granted. You can give them these by putting them together in a neat package. You can get a basket and put in soap, shampoo, towels, toothpaste, and toothbrushes. If all the students get involved then there'll be able to help a lot of homeless families.

- Donate Books to Children - Books are expensive and many children cannot afford them. By running a book donation drive you can provide textbooks for schools in poor areas. If you don't have extra textbooks for academic purposes you can still donate the books that you have. Storybooks can help improve a young child's reading and writing skills so even those are highly appreciated.



- Organize a Nature Walk - A nature walk can be fun. This activity involves walking from the school to a certain location. During the walk, the students can pick up trash and recyclable junk. Other students can hold banners to promote cleaning the environment or recycling. Others can give out educational pamphlets to those they come across in the streets.
- Sell Home-Baked Cookies - Here's a service project that has proven effective over the years. Even the Girl Scouts sell cookies to raise funds. You can start a cookie-baking activity at school and then dedicate a few days to sell these cookies. (Taking pre-orders is safest – be sure to let the buyer know that the making of the cookies is fully supervised by a staff member at school.) The funds can go to a charity group of your choice.

MILITARY



- Send Cards to Soldiers - Soldiers sacrifice a lot for the safety of the country and their loved ones. Middle school students can show their appreciation by writing cards and send them to the local military office. Those cards will go to the soldiers fighting overseas. It will help remind them that they're fighting for a reason and that the people they're protecting still care.

- Tutor Young Kids After School - You can help the community by being a leader for the younger kids in school. Tutoring them after school is a great way of giving back. You're preparing them for the challenges ahead while ensuring they can deal with the obstacles right in front of them. You can focus on just students having a hard time with their studies or tutor anyone interested.
- Teach the Elderly How to Use Computers - A lot of older people don't know how to use computers or the Internet. You can help these people catch up with the digital age. Even basic activities like using e-mail and social media sites such as Facebook can be a big help. It will help them communicate more with their peers and family.
- Launch an After-School Club - There are many after-school club ideas to organize. You can focus on playing tabletop games, for example. Tabletop games, such as Dungeons and Dragons, help with social anxiety. It also improves reading and writing skills. You can make an after-school club for acting, poetry writing, music, and more.

- Read a Book for the Visually Impaired - Blind people don't have the luxury to enjoy all the books that most people do. There are books printed in Braille but not all of them are. You can organize a group of students to resolve this issue. You can read some books for the blind, allowing them to enjoy the books they may not be able to access.
- March for a cause. It could be a march to support cancer or to bring awareness regarding sexual harassment. You could march to pronounce your support for renewable energy, fight against climate change, or something political in nature.
- Animals: Local animal shelters are always in need of volunteers even for simple tasks such as cleaning cages, answering phones, or making holiday decorations for the shelter waiting room. Contact a local shelter and speak with a volunteer coordinator to see what help is needed. Don't have a local shelter or a way for your child to get to one? Have her visit the "animals" section of DoSomething.org for options on how to help animals. (<https://www.dosomething.org/volunteer/animals>)
- Every community has senior citizens who would relish the time and help that a teen could lend. Most towns and cities have a senior center or a private nursing home where volunteers are needed. The recreation director who helps plans activities for the seniors is a good person to contact. Even a small amount of time with a senior can make a difference. Teens could offer manicures to elderly women or perhaps help seniors learn to use a computer and email to stay in touch with their own grandchildren. Tweens could adopt a senior citizen as a "grand-friend" and write letters to him. Raking leaves or shoveling snow for a senior citizen is often a welcome way to help. Even just going for a walk with an elderly member of the community, delivering her a meal, or reading to an elder who is housebound can make their day.



**Special
Olympics**

- Helping other kids: For student athletes, a great way to give back to others is to volunteer at a Special Olympics event. There are hundreds of Special Olympics offices around the world, and all of them need volunteers at various times during the year. Find the Special Olympics office nearest your home. Teens can help out at the actual sporting events as well as get involved in Special Olympics. (<https://www.specialolympics.org/>)
- Troop support: Volunteering to help support active duty U.S. servicemen and women is a great initiative for tweens and teens. Begin by contacting an organization that ships packages to troops, such as Operation Gratitude (<http://www.operationgratitude.com/>) or Operation Troop Support (<http://operationtroopsupport.org/>). These and other organizations collect donated items, which they package and send to individually named service members deployed in hostile regions. The donated items can include snacks, entertainment items, and personal letters of appreciation, as well as small items like socks, decks of cards, candy, and even toothbrushes. Teens can organize a donation drive and collect some of the most needed items. As the holidays approach, these organizations are also looking for volunteers to help wrap gifts to ship to servicemen and women, and kids can also write cards and draw pictures to include in the packages. "For the soldiers, receiving the cards is truly priceless," says Christine Moody of Operation Troop Support.
- help clear hiking trails or help with beach cleanups. Maryland is lucky to have the Chesapeake Bay Foundation in their back yard – contact them to see what kind of environmental projects you to do to help!
- Launch a campaign to get friends to put their computers and other electronic devices in sleep mode before going to bed, thereby saving energy;
- Make Valentine's for Senior Citizens.
- Collect sleep-away camp items for Camp Dreamcatcher (<http://campdreamcatcher.org/>) a program for children whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS.
- Donate kids' craft kits to a local children's hospital.
- Organize a board game night at your local nursing home. Gather your friends and favorite classic games, and plan a fun afternoon.
- Decorate placemats for Meals on Wheels. (<http://www.mowaa.org/>)
- Make a no-sew fleece blanket for a child in need through Project Linus. (<http://www.projectlinus.org/>)



- Have a garage sale or lemonade stand for your favorite cause.
- Plan an afternoon of fun: crafts, a movie and popcorn afternoon, or a kickball tournament at a children's home or refugee center. Plan a day of fun!
- When school supplies are very cheap at the beginning of the year, pack up a backpack and supplies for a local child in need – the YMCA (<http://www.ymca.net/>) frequently collects these, in addition to other organizations.
- Bring gently used board games and decks of cards to a local homeless shelter.
- Create ceramic containers to sell as part of their Empty Bowls Project that raises awareness and funds to combat hunger and homelessness. (<http://bit.ly/2AKu38l>)
- Put on gloves and pick up litter at your local park.
- Write a letter to your elected official about a cause you believe in.
- Volunteer at an animal shelter- play with the dogs and cats, help to brush them, and clean up after them.
- Read stories to or share your talent with younger children. Be a positive role model that kids can look up to! (link up with your feeder elementary school!)
- Stuff warm socks with snacks and fruit to pass out to people who are homeless.
- Secretly rake leaves or shovel snow for a neighbor in need (especially great for single moms and elderly residents!)
- Make sure your school is recycling- talk to your city hall to get recycling bins for all of the classrooms and make posters to explain what materials can be recycled.
- Hold a “dog wash” to raise money for a local animal shelter.
- Volunteer to read letters or the newspaper to residents in nursing homes.
- Collect used sporting equipment and donate to communities that do not have access (such as Level the Playing Field to help kids in the US (http://www.levelingtheplayingfield.org/collect_sports_equipment))
- Donate used baby and toddler toys to a shelter, rescue mission, children's home, etc.
- Go through the books you've grown out of and donate them schools, shelters, rescue missions, etc.
- Hold a spa day at a nearby nursing home for residents: paint their nails and do their hair and make-up.



- Donate your gently used stuffed animals to a local firehouse or police station to give to children in emergencies. (<http://www.stuffedanimalsforemergencies.org/>)
- Find out when the next sporting event is for your local Special Olympics teams, and go there as cheerleaders for the participants with signs, balloons, and noisemakers (<http://www.specialolympics.org/>)
- Work with your friends to make a “New Student” guide to your town that includes your favorite parks, a map of the neighborhood, and fun things to do.

- Plant a garden or tree that your school or neighborhood can enjoy – beautify an area or create a memorial or honor garden (service men in your area? Alumni of your school?)
- Promote bike riding and carpooling at your school to reduce traffic and air pollution.
- Make crafts or write letters to be included in soldier care packages. Operation Gratitude will help you come up with ideas and find a donation center near you. (<https://www.operationgratitude.com/can-help/>)



- Organize a food drive in your neighborhood to support a local food bank, and have your children pick their favorite foods to donate. Feeding America's Food Bank locator is searchable by zip code and can help you find a food bank near you. (<http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx>)
- Fill backpacks with cups, pots, pans, soap, toothpaste, and other cosmetics to create homeless “survival kits” to be distributed to homeless people in your community, or find out other ways you can show your support by simply caring (http://nationalhomeless.org/want_to_help/)



- Cleaning out your closets to make room for the next season's clothing? Save gently used clothing and donate it to your local family shelter, refugee center or charity thrift store. (<http://thriftstores.net/>)
- Start a crew of neighborhood children to provide free lawn care and snow shoveling services for seniors in your community. Check out Points of Light's resources for volunteers for tips on how to get started. (<http://www.pointsoflight.org/get-resources/volunteers>)
- During lunch at school, host a hot chocolate or lemonade-stand and a charity of your choosing. Charity Navigator will help you find the for donations. (<http://www.charitynavigator.org/>)
- Be a companion to a senior in a local nursing home. Make cards and around the holidays. Use Create the Good's guide for volunteering with started. (<http://createthegood.org/campaign/volunteeringwithseniors>)
- Collect used towels and pet toys and donate them to your local animal shelter.



donate the proceeds to perfect organization

sing carols for them seniors to help you get



- Adopt a military family for the Holidays and bring food, comfort, and friendship to a family struggling to get by. (<http://soldiersangels.org/Adopt-A-Family.html>)

Don't forget to complete your student service-learning forms – service learning is a graduation requirement!

Service Learning

Preparation

Action *Direct – Indirect – Advocacy*

Reflection



- ◆ Direct Action – students have face-to-face contact with the service recipients. For example: tutoring; serving meals at a homeless shelter; working with the elderly in a nursing home, etc.
- ◆ Indirect Action – students perform a service without having face-to-face contact with the recipient. Usually resources are channeled to help alleviate a problem. For example: food and clothing drives; “a-thins” or fundraisers; environmental projects, etc.
- ◆ Advocacy – students educate others about a particular issue with the goal being to eliminate the cause of a particular problem. For example; writing letters to legislators or editors; preparing and displaying posters, plays, or other educational materials for others, etc.

Reflection

- ◆ To explore the impact and importance of citizen service to the community
- ◆ To understand how the things that are learned in class relate to the “real” world
- ◆ To gain insights into career connections
- ◆ To attend to broader issues as well as personal experience

Service Learning Resources Websites

<https://gsn.nylc.org/clearinghouse>

<https://nylc.org/service-learning/>

<http://bit.ly/2D5U8An>

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/SERVICE/webresources.html>