

Family Friendly Project Ideas

1) Animal Friends:

-Collect items to meet an animal shelter's needs, such as pet food or toys

Material's needed:

Collection bin with colorful signage

Poster Board

Markers

Posters or handouts with info about the recipient animal shelter, to display or distribute

Volunteer Leader Instructions

Advertise the collection when publicizing the event. Asking families to bring the needed items

Set-up the collection bin with a big colorful sign celebrating the donations

Keep a tally of donated items on a poster in a visible location

Make information available on the recipient animal shelter via poster or handout.

2) Winter Scarves

Create fleece or hand-made scarves for the homeless/ Ronald McDonald House

Material's needed:

Fleece (suggested source: www.picotextiles.com)

Sharp scissors (adult size)

Optional: knitting needles and yarn, or crochet hooks and thread, and scarf patterns

Volunteer Instructions – Fleece scarves

Cut bolts of fleece into strips 10 inches wide

Cut a 1"x2" fringe into the ends of the scarf

Optional: Tie each piece of fringe into a knot to add textile

Volunteer Instructions – Knitted/Crocheted scarves

Station several skilled knitting or crocheting volunteers at this project

Skilled volunteers teach family volunteers the basics of knitting or crocheting, allowing them to practice on a practice scarf before adding a stitch or a row to one of the scarves in progress

Have skilled volunteers being work on a number of scarves, enough for several families to work on them at once.

3) Snack packs

Paper bags decorated with cheerful drawings or messages and packed with snacks, to donate through a food pantry.

Materials needed:

Individually packed snacks such as:

- Trail mix
- Cookies
- Bananas, Pretzels
- Crackers
- Dried Fruit
- Granola Bars

Paper lunch bags or more decorative paper bags with handles

100% juice boxes

Pencils, markers, crayons

Volunteer Leader Instructions

Arrange Snack Packs ingredients in an assembly line, with a bag-decorating station at the beginning

Volunteer Instructions

Decorate a bag with the words, "Snack Pack" or an inspirational message and cheerful drawings. Messages should NOT mention having negative situations, and should NOT say, "I'm sorry you're hungry" or "I'm sorry you're having a hard time."

Assemble one Snack Pack containing one of each item

4) Birthday Cards or Love Letters for seniors

These cards and letters will brighten a senior's day, bringing some cheer to someone who may not live with family members or have a wide support network.

Materials needed:

Construction Paper or cardstock

Pencils, markers, crayons

Poems – original or classic

Volunteer instructions

Design and create a cheerful birthday card or love letter to make a senior smile

Focus on the positive, adding inspirational quotes or poems rather than messages like, "I hope you're not lonely" or "I'm sorry you're having a hard time."

5) Pillow Pals

Decorate the hem of a new pillowcase and fill it with items that will make a young person feel comforted in an unfamiliar environment. Tie with a ribbon and label with gender and age. Pillow Pals can be donated to children in group homes, homeless shelters, or domestic violence shelters.

Materials needed:

To include in the pillowcases:

- New pillowcases
- New stuffed animals (small): Used stuffed animals might contain allergens hazardous to children with asthma
- Books: Can be gently used, but must have no torn or scribbled pages
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste tubes
- Pens or pencils
- Pads of paper
- Flashlights with batteries

To decorate and close:

- Fabric paint, fabric markers, or embroidery thread and needle (for those skilled in embroidery)
- Ribbon
- Scissors
- Cardboard, or cardstock and pens or markers, to make tags.

Volunteer instructions

Collect new pillowcases

Decorate the hem on one side only. Less is more.

Fill with stuffed animals, books, toothbrushes, etc.

Tie the pillowcase closed with ribbon

Add a tag indicating the intended age and gender of the recipient.

6) Thank-You notes for Local Heroes

Firefighters, First responders, Police Officers

Materials needed:

Construction paper

Pencils

Markers

Crayons

Volunteer Instructions

Choose whether to write a card or draw a picture to a firefighter, a first responder (EMT or paramedic), or a police officer.

Using pencil first, write messages on the front and inside of the card, thanking the person for his service to the community and first risking his or her life

Add picture and color

IF writing to a volunteer, such as a volunteer firefighter or volunteer EMT, thank him/her for their volunteer service and explain that you volunteer too. Explain what you have done as a volunteer and why you think volunteering is important.

7) Disaster Preparedness Kits

Prepare disaster preparedness kits to donate to families through the red cross or the food pantry. The following items are inexpensive and easily attainable. These kits, while not containing all required materials, will serve as a helpful head start for people who would like to be prepared.

Materials needed:

- A box, shoebox, or plastic box with a cover
- Markers, paint, collage, or another creative medium
- Construction paper or cardstock
- Pencils, markers, crayons

A copy of the “Disaster Supplies Kit” checklist for recipients to use when gathering the rest of the items for the Kit, which is included at the end of the lesson plan. Check off the items that you have already included. The checklist can be printed from pages 8-9 of the “Preparing for Disaster” handout at <http://www.redcross.org/images/pdfs/preparedness/A4600.pdf>. Optionally, print out the entire handout to include.

A list of emergency phone numbers, written clearly on sturdy paper include the following phone numbers or fields for the recipient to fill in:

- 911 or an emergency number:
- Electric company Phone Number:
- Gas Company Phone Number:
- Closest Neighbor’s Name and Phone Number:
- Emergency Contact – Family Member Name and Phone Number:

Another Family Member’s name and phone number:

Low cost first aid kit items (adhesive bandages, etc.)

A gallon milk jug (for the recipient to fill with water in preparation for a disaster)

Sanitation and hygiene items (hand sanitizer, moist towelettes, and toilet paper)

Matches in a waterproof container (such as a Ziploc bag)

A low-cost plastic whistle

An infant item, such as a disposable diaper or a pacifier

A map of the local area (can be printed from the Internet)

Volunteer Leader Instructions

Make arrangements with a recipient organization to donate the kits

Arrange kit ingredients in an assembly line, with a box-decorating station at the beginning

Volunteer Instructions

Start with a box, shoebox, or plastic box with a cover

Label the box and decorate it with markers, paint, collage, or another creative median

Pack the box with one of each item

Make a card out of construction paper or cardstock to include, with well wishes and an explanation of the box's content and purpose.

8) 'Lights Out!' Light-Switch Plate

Volunteers can make one light-switch plate to take home, and one to be donated through a food pantry. Light-switch plates remind us to save electricity, which protects not only our wallets but the environment as well.

Materials needed

- "Light's Out!" light-switch plate template
- Cardstock (for templates and plates)
- Scissors
- Pencils, markers, crayons

Volunteer instructions

Trace the light-switch plate template and cut it out of cardstock

Come up with a clever phrase as a reminder to turn off the light when leaving the room, and write it in pencil first. Then, go back and color them in.

Take one light-switch plate home to attach over an existing light-switch plate with tape, and make a second one to donate.

9) Garbage Grabbers

Make a garbage grabber to help you pick up trash in local neighborhoods and parks

Materials needed

- Wire clothes hanger, pillow
- PVC plastic pipe, roughly 3 feet long and 1 inch in diameter, or instead of PVC pipe, empty paper towel rolls can be taped together to form a pipe.
- String
- Duct tape
- Wooden dowels (1.4 inch in diameter, longer than the piece of PVC pipe)
- Rubber bands

Volunteer instructions

Untwist the wire hanger to form one big "V" with the points pointing inward, forming the grabber hands

Attach the dowel to the straightened hanger with duct tape, allowing the grabber hands to extend six inches beyond the end of the dowel. Insert the dowel, attached to the hanger, into the PVC plastic pipe.

- Add rubber bands or duct tape to each of the hands to make it easier to pick things up
- Pull on the dowel to make the grabber hands come together

10) Composting Worm Bins

Build a composting worm bin, adapting a plastic container and adding the right ingredients. Composting worm bins allow you to cut down on waste and produce fertile soil for gardening or growing produce at home. For additional guidance, visit the New York City Compost Project's Web site at <http://nyccompost.org/how/wormbin.html>.

Materials Needed

Re-sealed plastic container, relatively shallow, opaque

Leaves, potting soil, or shredded newspaper

Tea bags

Water

Worms: Up to 1 pound per 1 square foot of container space

Kitchen scraps

Coffee grounds

NO: Meat, fish, dairy

Handouts with instructions on maintaining and harvesting the composting worm bin and how to use the compost.

Hammer and nail for poking holes in plastic container

Washed fruits and vegetable scraps

Paper napkins

AVOID an excess of fruit, which may attract flies

Volunteer Leader Preparations

Have families bring their own plastic bins or containers.

Have families bring their own kitchen scraps, meeting the specifications above, in re-sealable plastic bags.

Volunteer Leader Instructions

Add about ten air holes to the plastic bin, in the top and the top of the sides. Do the job away from the children.

Volunteer Instructions

Add most of the bedding material. If shredded paper has not been prepared, the volunteer should tear up the paper

Add the kitchen scraps. Feed the worms a varied diet rather than an excess of fruit, which will attract fruit flies

Add the worms

Cover the kitchen scraps and worms with the rest of the bedding material

Keep the bedding moist by sprinkling or spraying water

Take home directions on how to maintain and harvest the composting worm bin and how to use the compost.

11) Terrariums

Learn about ecosystems by building a terrarium. Take it home with you to help teach your friends and family, or donate to a school classroom, library, assisted living facility, or nursing home.

Materials Needed

Clear containers such as glass or plastic jars, cookie jars, fish bowls, or two clear plastic cups (to tape together at the end)

Activated charcoal, to filter the air (in closed terrariums)

Soil

Copies of instructions for maintaining a terrarium

Plants: plants that grow well in terrariums include Neanthe Bella Palm, Buttom Fern, Pitcher Plant, Butterwort, miniature African violets, Bird Nest Sansiviera, Irish moss cacti, and herbs

Spaghnum Moss

Water

Sand or pebbles

Volunteer Leader Preparation

Closed terrariums are more difficult to maintain than open terrariums. If you would like to lead family volunteers in making closed terrariums, enlist a Volunteer Leader skilled in terrarium making to help

Volunteer Instructions

Layer the terrarium ingredients as follows: (1) Sand or pebbles, (2) Activated charcoal, (3) Spaghnum Moss, (4) Soil, (5) Plants. Arrange the plants in an appealing design.

Close the terrarium now if it is going to be closed, but do not seal it permanently, you till need to open it occasionally for maintenance.

Take the terrarium home along with instructions for maintenance, or donate it to a school classroom, library, assisted living facility, or nursing home.

12) Healthy Eating Placemats

Healthy Eating Placemats are welcomes as donations at food pantries, soup kitchens, or Meals on Wheels.

Materials Needed

Construction paper or cardstock

Stencils of healthy foods, or letters of the alphabet (to aid in adding words)

Pencils, markers, crayons

Clear contact paper (for laminating placemats)

Scissors

Volunteer Instructions

Come up with a healthy eating placement design and draw it on construction paper in pencil first. Design ideas may include a chart with healthy foods depicted on one side, and unhealthy foods on the other.

Add color using markers and crayons

Laminate the placemat using clear contact paper, with a Volunteer Leader's assistance.

13) School-Supply backpacks

Pack backpacks with needed school supplies for students at under-resourced schools, children in shelters, or children in foster care.

Materials Needed

Backpacks

Notebooks or white-lined paper

Rulers

Three-ring binders – optional

Inspirational quotes on the subject of academics and doing well in school

Adhesive foam letters or fabric markers

Pencils

Erasers

Construction paper or cardstock for making cards

Markers, pencils, crayons (for volunteer use)

Volunteer instructions

Pack a backpack with one of each item

Place the adhesive foam letters or fabric markers into the backpacks with everything else. (The recipients will use these to decorate their own backpacks, so volunteers should not decorate the backpacks themselves.)

Make a card with an inspirational quotation about succeeding in school, and include it in the backpack. Messages should focus on the positive, such as inspirational quotes, avoiding messages like "I hope you feel better" and "I'm sorry you're having a hard time."

14) Baby Bags

Make a Baby Bag for a new mother, filling a bag with newborn necessities. Add a homemade card to welcome the new baby.

Materials Needed

Canvas bags or inexpensive backpacks

Baby powder

Baby toy, or NEW soft stuffed animal

Receiving blanket

Adhesive foam letters or fabric markers

Diaper rash ointment

Baby bottles

Baby towels

Baby wipes

Digital thermometer

T-Shirts

Wash cloths

Volunteer Leader Preparation

Publicize the project as a collection when publicizing the family volunteer fair, asking for the bag contents as well as the canvas bags and backpacks

Volunteer Instructions

Pack a bag with one of each item

Place the adhesive foam letters or fabric markers into the backpacks along with everything else. The recipients will use these to decorate their own backpacks. Volunteers should not decorate the bags

Make a card with cheerful messages welcoming the baby into the world, to include in the bag. Messages should focus on the positive, such as inspirational quotes, avoid messages like "I hope you feel better" and "I'm sorry you're having a hard time."