

Community Service Activity Ideas for 9- to 12-Year-Olds

Overview

Early adolescents are at a great age to be involved with community service. Several reasons why they should participate in community service activities follow.

- Volunteering allows children to contribute to a cause relevant to their lives.
- Youth begin to see themselves as members of the community and take a step forward in learning about their responsibility to the world.
- Volunteering allows youth to succeed in an area different from academics, athletics or popularity.
- Community service helps create a sense of self-worth as youth share their skills, talents and efforts.
- Youth will develop a sense of being responsible for their communities and a sense that citizenship requires them to actively participate in their communities.
- Most young people this age love being a part of a group as this is a way to build friendships. Consider service projects that are done as a group.

Activities

Sometimes the hardest part of community service is getting started. Some community service ideas that work especially well with 9- to 12-year-olds follow.

- Collecting backpacks and school supplies for kids who can't afford them.
- Making bird feeders and setting up bird feeding stations at hospitals, schools and community sites.
- Setting up pen pal relationships with kids from another country or another part of the United States and sharing ways they can help their neighborhoods.
- Starting an after-school literature or reading club with younger kids.
- Painting trash barrels and benches at community parks and county fairgrounds.
- Planting flowers in cemeteries and local parks and at community centers, facilities for people with disabilities and hospitals.
- Collecting hats, scarves and mittens and using them to decorate a holiday tree for a local shelter.
- Making cards for Veterans Day. Celebrate with veterans at a veterans organization or veterans hospital.
- Collecting new sleeping bags and teddy bears for homeless children. Purchasing and decorating bear-sized T-shirts with fabric paint, then visiting a shelter to give the donated items to children there. Have a meal with the residents and do story time together as a group.
- Becoming a pen pal with an elderly or shut-in resident in the community.
- Helping serve dinner at a homeless shelter.
- Working as volunteers at a Special Olympics.
- Gathering gently used books and toys that have been outgrown and donating the items to children in foster care.

“There is no greater commitment than when people give of themselves. Volunteer activity is the ultimate demonstration of caring.”

- John W. Armerman

Teen Service Officer – A Community Service Idea for 13- to 19-Year-Olds

Many teens are ready to plan and organize their own community service activities with the guidance of the leader. Youth at this age may be eager to take on a leadership role and many may be passionate about a particular cause that they would like to become involved with through community service.

Teen Service Officer

Consider adding the teen service officer to your panel of club officers. The teen service officer plans, coordinates and implements community service-learning opportunities for the 4-H club or group for a year of service. This could be a shared position in which two members have the role of co-teen service officer. This position is for teens who like to see things accomplished and enjoy the satisfaction of helping others.

Responsibilities:

The teen service officer will:

- Motivate others to get involved with citizenship and community service-learning.
- Provide the group with project ideas.
- Work with the club or group to organize and plan community service projects.
- Handle public relations and get the project in the newspaper or on the radio.
- Plan recognition for members when the service project is complete. (Visit Awards, Recognition & Opportunities at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/commserv/commservawards.html> for further ideas.)
- Celebrate with the club or group over the success of the project.

Resources and Support Available:

The following Michigan 4-H Youth Development educational materials are available from your county MSU Extension office.

- **YEA! Youth Experiencing Action: A Community Service-Learning Guide (4H1533)** — Designed to be used with youth aged 14 to 19, the guide helps teams plan, conduct and evaluate community service-learning projects.
- **Civic Engagement: After-School Activities for Citizenship, Leadership and Service** — Program delivery strategies for after-school civic engagement activities. Available online from National 4-H After-school at <http://4-hafterschool.org/>
- **4-H Citizenship: Government Is Us!** — A civic engagement curriculum for Teens. (available fall 2007)
- **The Citizenship Adventure Kit – Public Adventures** — This curriculum includes a kit for grades 4-12 and a handbook for adult and teen volunteers. The series provides the tools young people need to define, plan, implement and evaluate an active citizenship group project. Available from the 4-H Mall at <http://www.4-hmall.org/>.

Skills and Knowledge Needed:

- Interest in helping others
- Organization and creativity
- Ability or interest in learning how to plan activities

Time Required:

- About 2 hours a week (This depends upon the amount of time it takes to do the project and the amount of time that the teen service officer can devote to it.)

Expected Results:

- Making a difference in the community
- Value and respect for diversity
- An understanding that our actions have consequences
- And many others

Contact Persons:

- County 4-H staff
- 4-H volunteer leader

Activities

For more activities for 13- to 19-year-olds visit the Michigan Citizenship, Leadership and Service 4-H web site at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/4h/leadership.html>

“Nothing’s stronger than the heart of a volunteer”

– Unknown

The idea for the teen service officer originated with Judy See, Monroe County 4-H Youth Educator.

More Than 250 Community Service Ideas

The following is a list of ideas for community service projects. Some suggest collecting or doing something for a particular type of organization in your area. If you decide to donate your time to a particular organization, contact it to discuss the project before you start.

1. Hold an egg hunt for kids in a shelter.
2. Go “4-H Extreme”: Try a community service activity you’ve never done before.
3. Form a childcare group in your community.
4. Donate time or money to your local Red Cross.
5. Create a senior prom for a local senior home.
6. Collect baby equipment and supplies for new parents with limited resources.
7. Fill a laundry basket with household items for a relocated homeless family.
8. Help build a Habitat for Humanity home for a family living in a low-income situation.
9. Give your time to a younger child – plan a Harry Potter or other book-themed party at the local library.
10. Have a garage sale and donate the money you earn to a charity.
11. Hold a rally to encourage more young people to be involved in their communities.
12. Organize a give center where those who cannot afford gifts can get clothes, toys and other items. This is a place where people can find gifts to give to other people.
13. Mow an elderly neighbor’s lawn.
14. Participate in a “walk a kid home from school” program.
15. Participate in a violence prevention project in your area.
16. Teach a card game to an elderly person.
17. Lead a bingo game for nursing home residents.
18. Plan a “private volunteer recognition party” with live music and food.
19. Repair and donate toys to a shelter.
20. Organize a mitten, hat and scarf drive.
21. Learn how to play a game such as chess, and teach someone else how to play it, too.
22. Volunteer for a cause you believe in.
23. Collect, repair and donate used bikes to a community agency.
24. Make posters or displays promoting 4-H to put in local store windows.
25. Walk dogs from the local animal shelter.
26. Organize an “animals on the street” fund drive. Ask a local artist to assist in the creation of an animal statue that can be displayed in the street and then auctioned with proceeds going to the local animal shelter
27. Paint murals over graffiti.
28. Help someone improve his or her job interview skills.
29. Join a political campaign and work to get someone elected.
30. Make a quilt to give to a museum.
31. Collect blankets for a local shelter.
32. Arrange to donate your old working computer to an after-school program.
33. Set up a pen pal relationship with someone from another country and share ways you can help your neighborhoods.
34. Encourage your friends to run in a 5K race.
35. If your community doesn’t have a food bank, work with others to start one.
36. Record the inscriptions on grave markers in an old cemetery for a local genealogy society.
37. Help train Special Olympics athletes.
38. Set up a book exchange so kids can trade books they’ve read for ones they haven’t.
39. Learn American Sign Language and teach it to someone else.
40. Sponsor a health fair that offers free blood pressure, vision and hearing tests.
41. Hold a puppet show for hospitalized kids – make them laugh.
42. Become a library helper.
43. Organize a river cleanup.
44. Photograph a local event and donate the pictures to your local historical museum.
45. Build birdhouses and donate them to a nature center.
46. Work with the fire department on safety programs.
47. Sponsor a bike-a-thon and give away bike safety prizes.
48. Find out what a homeless shelter needs and then just “do it.”
49. Connect with another club and do a joint community service activity.
50. Help a kid by helping a parent.
51. Fill bags or baskets with summer games for kids and give to a parks department.
52. Help build and fill shelves at a food bank.
53. Organize a car wash to raise money for a cause.
54. Sponsor a babysitting class for a group of middle schoolers.

55. Organize and promote a community-wide cleanup week.
56. Trick or treat for canned goods and donate the collected items to a local charity.
57. Tell someone about what you have learned in 4-H.
58. Highlight your club's community service activities on a web site.
59. Research a community issue and create a display or flyers on it to share with community members.
60. Adopt a new immigrant family and help them connect to the community.
61. Teach seniors your dances and ask them to teach you theirs.
62. Collect used sports equipment that you can donate to families with limited resources.
63. Sponsor food drives for a domestic violence shelter.
64. Build a playground for kids with physical disabilities.
65. Teach tobacco prevention activities at a camp.
66. Deliver demonstrations on health and exercise in schools.
67. Update the signs on and refurbish a park trail.
68. Adopt an acre of rainforest.
69. Teach someone to read.
70. Improve your environment by starting an advocacy group and sharing information with your town council.
71. Make pajamas for kids at a youth center. Ask your local sheriff's department for its location.
72. Make a presentation about youth who are involved in community service activities.
73. Start a web site for your club or group.
74. Photograph old barns and homesteads in your community.
75. Coach a youth sports team.
76. Mail your letters with stamps celebrating different ethnic cultures.
77. Donate books or personal items to teens at a local juvenile detention center.
78. Test the health of the water in your local lakes, rivers or streams.
79. Organize a senior garden.
80. Arrange a clown performance for people with special needs.
81. Organize a hunter safety program in your community.
82. Plant a tree.
83. Celebrate other cultures with art exhibits, performances and poetry readings.
84. Build flower boxes for Habitat for Humanity homes.
85. Write letters for an elderly person.
86. Raise a dog to assist someone with a disability through an organization such as Leader Dogs for the Blind..
87. Learn your rights and responsibilities as a citizen or resident.
88. Perform an act of kindness for a friend.
89. Give some of your allowance to a charity you believe in.
90. Deliver holiday meals to a senior citizen group.
91. Collect crazy and fun hats for kids receiving chemotherapy treatments.
92. Clip coupons and leave them at a local food pantry.
93. Help a youth worker.
94. Give away hugs.
95. Donate old eyeglasses to an organization that recycles them for people with limited resources.
96. Paint park benches.
97. Organize a "walk a kid to school day" and learn about the kids' neighborhood.
98. Identify a skill you have and use a volunteer experience to help improve it.
99. Talk to police officers to gather after-school ideas for kids and teens in the community.
100. Thank the care givers in your family – do something special for them.
101. Visit people with AIDS who are in the hospital.
102. Join and help a national or local children's advocacy group.
103. Map your community's bike trails.
104. Get involved with your local humane society in controlling pet populations.
105. Make placemats with information about proper fireworks use and ask a local fast food restaurant to use them.
106. Start a career day at your school.
107. Make and distribute a brochure of local services available to parents.
108. Prepare ethnic holiday dishes for a soup kitchen.
109. Be a coach – start a soccer or other sports team for younger children.
110. Take time to think, talk or write about your community service activity.
111. Become a "little chef" and cook vegetables for your family.
112. Start a program to recycle athletic shoes.
113. Volunteer at a hospital.
114. Pick up trash.
115. Read a story about President Abraham Lincoln to kids at a daycare center.
116. Hold an "old video drive" for your local library.
117. Establish and maintain a demonstration pot or garden of native plants in a community park.
118. Help seniors with their shopping.
119. Dress up like President George Washington and share a story about him.
120. Contact your American Legion group and help decorate your town for Independence Day.
121. Donate suitcases to kids in foster care.
122. Help senior citizens install smoke alarms in their homes.
123. Shovel snow for a local community center.
124. Put together layettes for moms and dads with limited-resources.

125. Organize a campaign to raise money for park playground equipment.
126. Make a puppet show that promotes healthy living.
127. Involve a friend in a community service activity.
128. Organize a work day at the local farmers market to assist senior citizens.
129. Pick up litter.
130. Speak out against violence.
131. Teach a skill you have to another person.
132. Volunteer to help with childcare for those who cannot afford to pay.
133. Coordinate a community dance for senior citizens.
134. Arrange a pet food and supply drive for the local animal shelter.
135. Volunteer at your local zoo.
136. Organize a pet flea bath.
137. Make holiday cards for people in nursing homes.
138. Donate arts and crafts supplies to groups who can't afford them.
139. Find older adults who want to teach quilting, knitting and other skills to youth.
140. Adopt a monument and keep it clean and weed free.
141. Volunteer at service agencies that allow you to explore career interests.
142. Make posters and displays of safe and unsafe Halloween costumes, masks and face paints.
143. Contact a cable station and start a teen issues television show.
144. Organize a winter coat drive.
145. Volunteer to produce a community organization's newsletter.
146. Research and share historic contributions of Hispanic Americans or Asian Pacific Americans in your community.
147. Take part in restaurant food recovery programs.
148. Volunteer to be a museum guide.
149. Help out at youth league athletic events.
150. Establish a fitness course in a public park.
151. Preserve the heritage of others.
152. Create table arrangements for a soup kitchen.
153. Make a storefront display about the cardiovascular system.
154. Clean and repair wheelchairs.
155. Find out how you can help people to register to vote.
156. Tape record children's books for kids with vision impairments to listen to.
157. Find new ways to cope with stress such as dancing, singing and in-line skating.
158. Work with an adult literacy program.
159. Help in your local parks and recreation department.
160. Plan and present a boat safety event.
161. Entertain residents of a nursing home with a play or skit.
162. Form or join an existing teen group to promote humor, fun and exercise.
163. Take flowers to the home of a senior citizen.
164. Organize a letter writing campaign.
165. Collect toys for families who have lost their homes to fire.
166. Fill a shoebox with games for a neighborhood kid.
167. Help parents at a domestic violence shelter.
168. Collect baby items and donate them to a local charity.
169. Organize a public issues forum for your neighborhood.
170. Start or join a neighborhood watch group.
171. Lead a project for kids in an after-school program.
172. Volunteer in your community.
173. Adopt a zoo, forest, park or highway.
174. Sell your livestock animal at the fair and donate the proceeds to charity.
175. Make a window display on how others can raise a Leader Dog and ask a store owner to display it.
176. Help build a memorial.
177. Collect and donate clothes to the homeless.
178. Serve on community committees.
179. Hold a 5K run for a local charity.
180. Help a group of kids improve their computer skills.
181. Research your community's civil rights history and share that information with others.
182. Perform fun food science experiments with a group of younger kids.
183. Record and share your family traditions.
184. Create a campaign to get families biking and walking.
185. Organize an "ultimate Frisbee" tournament for an after-school program.
186. Organize a canned goods drive in conjunction with a community event.
187. Have a Halloween party for kids with special needs.
188. Take a lifesaving or water safety class.
189. Buy a fruit or vegetable that you've never tried and sample it with a younger child.
190. Lead tobacco use prevention activities with local youth sports groups.
191. Raise awareness for Special Olympics.
192. Organize a 4-H "Sew Read!" project for a group of kids.
193. Demonstrate home and yard composting in your community.
194. Do a puppet show at the library on why we need to wear bike helmets.
195. Start an after-school literature or reading club with younger kids.
196. Get permission to plant wildflowers in public rights-of-way.
197. Collect backpacks and school supplies for kids who can't afford them.
198. Do something nice for someone you know.
199. Donate the money from can and bottle deposits to a charity.
200. Help conduct a day camp for 5- to 7-year-olds.
201. Help serve dinner at a shelter.

202. Make a display to publicize your group's community service projects.
203. Offer an encouraging word to a friend.
204. Organize a farm safety program for kids.
205. Paint trash barrels for a park or county fairgrounds.
206. Organize a canned goods drive at a school dance and donate the food to a food bank.
207. Raise funds to help a family pay their heating bill.
208. Shovel someone's walk and don't tell them you did it.
209. Volunteer to make calls to potential club members. Bring a friend to your next club meeting.
210. Take pets to visit nursing homes or special education schools.
211. Plan a new, adventurous event for the young people in your community.
212. Ride your bike around your neighborhood and pick up the trash.
213. Take a friend's dog for a walk.
214. Organize a get-together between a nursing home and a youth center.
215. Find an art gallery and donate your visual arts project to raise money for charities.
216. Organize a small animal petting exhibit for a local festival.
217. Make and donate holiday decorations to a hospital or senior citizens home.
218. Start a "speak out on the importance of pets" kids' page in your local newspaper.
219. Collect and distribute blankets, pillows and clothing to people with limited resources.
220. Decorate a tree for a shelter with donated mittens, hats, socks and scarves.
221. Find ways to fight global poverty.
222. Collect and process items for disaster relief.
223. Organize a lawn mower repair clinic.
224. Volunteer for Meals on Wheels.
225. Help an elderly neighbor decorate his or her home for the holidays.
226. Hold a holiday clothing sale to benefit a homeless group.
227. Raise funds for mental and emotional health services in your community.
228. Organize and join in neighborhood social activities.
229. Participate in an annual holiday toy drive.
230. Collect pet food for an animal shelter.
231. Get pledges from local stores to support youth art and drama community activities.
232. Learn how to rock climb safely with a group of friends.
233. Visit someone who needs a friend.
234. Volunteer to help at your county fair.
235. Watch less than one hour of television a night and donate your extra time to a good cause.
236. Make, send or deliver Valentine's cards to veterans.
237. Volunteer at your local humane society.
238. Hold a "family traditions" night at a local nursing home or senior center.
239. Research and share historic contributions of African Americans in your community.
240. Hold an afternoon tea party for a group of 5-year-olds.
241. Pack and help distribute food at a food pantry.
242. Teach tobacco use prevention activities at an after-school program.
243. Work with County Parks Departments to design ways to help people with visual impairments experience parks.
244. Make a healthy bedtime snack for homeless kids.
245. Donate books you no longer use or have outgrown to a local library.
246. Hold a teen music concert for local teens.
247. Help a local environmental group.
248. Make sandwiches and cookies for a soup kitchen.
249. Tutor someone who needs help learning English.
250. Set up and supply bird feeding stations at hospitals, schools and community sites.
251. Sing holiday songs to people who are unable to leave their homes.
252. Paint a fence at a nature reserve.
253. Dress up and become a storyteller at a local library.
254. Weed a public garden.
255. Organize an interactive theater program about tobacco issues for your community.
256. Plant a tree in your community. (Ask for permission, first!)
257. Work with government officials to set up a hazardous waste disposal day.
258. Go for a walk with a senior citizen in your community.
259. Offer computer training to families with limited-resources.
260. Support a community cause and make a speech about it to a local service club.
261. Organize a sports league that focuses on skill development, not championships.
262. Write and read letters to elderly people in nursing homes.
263. Organize a community garden.
264. Help cook and serve a meal at a homeless shelter.
265. Make promotional flyers to put in grocery store bags for the Great American Smokeout.
266. Donate your garden produce to a homeless shelter or food kitchen.
267. Make first-aid kits for homeless shelters.
268. Become an advocate for diverse cultural appreciation in your community.
269. Build a wheelchair ramp for a person who needs one.
270. Start a recycling program at your school.
271. Help with your county 4-H riding program for kids with disabilities.
272. Read books on conflict resolution to younger youth.

273. Plan a fashion show for the public using recycled clothing.
274. Create a display with information about proper use of fireworks to be displayed where fireworks are sold.
275. Produce an “extreme 4-H” television program on cable television.
276. Grow a garden for a food bank.
277. Organize a community service exchange trip.
278. Help out at your local community center.
279. Help prevent youth tobacco use by organizing a skit on the respiratory system and show it to an after-school program.
280. Coordinate a homework huddle for kids who need schoolwork help.
281. Clean up a littered highway.
282. Contact a wildlife rehabilitation center and find out what could be donated.
283. Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
284. Volunteer to wash the car of a single mom.
285. Make cupcakes for nurses at a local hospital or nursing home to let them know they are appreciated.
286. Baby-sit for the family next door one evening for free.
287. Learn magic tricks and teach them to kids in an after-school program.
288. Research campgrounds in your area and create a brochure with your results.
289. Adopt a whale.
290. Have a bake sale and donate the proceeds to a children’s hospital.
291. Volunteer at a daycare center.

***“What we do for ourselves
dies with us. What we do for
others and the world
remains and is immortal.”***

– Albert Pine