

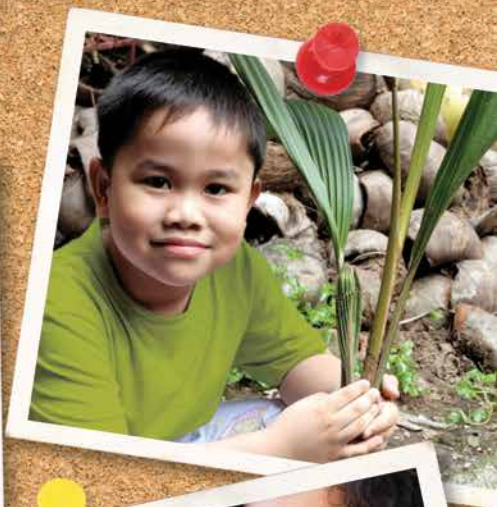
Updated
2nd Edition

The Kid's Guide to

Service Projects

Over 500 Service Ideas
for Young People Who
Want to Make a Difference

Endorsed by
Youth Service
America



free spirit
PUBLISHING®

by Barbara A. Lewis

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Updated
2nd Edition

Praise for *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects*:

VOYA Nonfiction Honor List

"A gold mine for kids who want to make a difference." —*NEA Today*

"An outstanding choice." —*School Library Journal*

"Indispensable for students and their teachers. The quality and breadth of service ideas are remarkable." —The Children's Book Council

"A good idea book for kids with a social conscience." —*USA Today*

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Dedication

To all of you who desire to serve:

"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

—**John Fitzgerald Kennedy**

This book is dedicated to Mike, who makes service a habit.

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Contents

A Note About the Updated Edition of <i>The Kid's Guide to Service Projects</i>	viii
Introduction	1
How to Use This Book.....	2
What's in It for You?	3
Service Requirements in Your School	5
I Want to Hear from You.....	6
Getting Started in Service	7
Ten Steps to Successful Service Projects	7
Using the Internet in Your Service Project.....	11
Animals	13
Control Animal Populations	14
Adopt a Zoo Animal.....	15
More Ideas for Helping Animals	17
Politics & Government	19
Help Get Out the Vote.....	20
More Ideas for Taking Political Action	21
Community Development	27
Neighborhood Building Blocks.....	28
More Ideas for Improving Your Community.....	31

Crime Fighting **33**

Start a Crime Clue Box 34

More Ideas for Fighting Crime 37

Support an Anticrime Law 42

More Ideas for Taking Legal Action 44

The Environment **45**

Clean Up Your School 46

Plant Trees 48

More Ideas for Planting 51

More Ideas for Improving the Environment 52

Start an Environmental Club 55

Hold a Recycling Contest 58

Support a Pick Up Ordinance 60

More Ideas for Recycling 61

Friendship **63**

Promote Tolerance 64

Make New Kid Survival Kits 68

More Ideas for Welcoming New Students 70

Adopt a Grandfriend 71

Health & Wellness **73**

Promote Healthy Habits 74

Promote Disease Prevention 76

More Ideas for Promoting Good Health 79

Homelessness	81
Make "I Care" Kits.....	82
Help People Who Are Out of Work.....	84
More Ideas for Helping People Who Are Homeless.....	85
Hunger	87
Hold a Food Drive.....	88
More Ideas for Fighting Hunger.....	90
Campaign Against Hunger.....	91
Grow a School Garden.....	93
Literacy	95
Try Tutoring.....	96
More Ideas for Promoting Literacy.....	99
People with Special Needs	101
Hold an Athletics Contest.....	102
More Ideas for Helping People with Special Needs.....	105
Seniors	107
Lend a Hand to Seniors.....	108
Help Seniors Feel Secure.....	109
Be a Friend to Seniors.....	110
Make Gift Baskets.....	111
More Ideas for Helping Seniors.....	113
Safety	115
Promote After-School Safety.....	116
Promote Community Safety.....	119
More Ideas for Promoting Safety.....	124
Spread Poison Control Awareness.....	127

Transportation	129
Work to Improve Transportation	130
More Ideas for Improving Transportation	132
Service Project How-Tos	134
How to Create a Flyer	134
How to Create a Petition	135
How to Create a Press Release	136
How to Create a Proclamation	137
How to Create a Proposal	138
How to Create a Public Service Announcement (PSA)	139
How to Create a Resolution	140
How to Create a Survey	141
How to Initiate an Ordinance or a Law	143
How to Lobby	144
How to Start a Statewide Fund	145
How to Support or Oppose a Law	146
Seven Ways to Fundraise	146
Index	148
About the Author	152





A Note About the Updated Edition of *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects*

For over a decade, thousands of kids like you have looked to this guide for ideas and inspiration to get started in community service. Kids in classrooms, in youth groups, with families, with friends, and on their own have taken the creative suggestions and tools in these pages and turned them into projects that have changed their world—even if only a small corner of it.

Because of its lasting popularity, *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects* has received a deluxe makeover with this updated edition. While the spirit of the book has not changed, it now has a fresh look, suggestions for using the Internet and new technologies, information on current service learning legislation, up-to-the-minute topics and issues to consider, and all the latest statistics and resources.

This well-loved guide is sure to inspire kids for another decade to get out there and make a difference in their corner of the world . . . and you can be one of them!

Introduction

When a class of sixth graders in Utah discovered a neighborhood toxic waste site, they decided to do something about it. Their efforts led to the cleanup of the site and a state Superfund for cleaning up other hazardous waste in their state.

A Florida teenager began a project to feed the hungry every Thanksgiving.

Kids in Texas banded together to save a historic battleship from the scrap heap.

A Georgia 16-year-old saved a historic courthouse from the wrecking ball.

A teenager in Pennsylvania started a town library.

A California 12-year-old began helping young victims of crime.

A tween in Toronto went barefoot for the duration of Canada's National Volunteer Week to raise awareness about global child poverty and to inspire people to volunteer.

Across the United States, Canada, and around the world, tens of thousands of young people are making a difference in their neighborhoods, schools, and communities. They're collecting cans for food shelves, reading to seniors, recycling, planting trees, and starting awareness campaigns. They're working alone and in groups to identify problems and come up with solutions.

If they can do it, so can you.

Maybe you're thinking, "I'm just one person!" So what? Lots of young people serve others on their own. Or they start on their own and inspire others to join them.

Maybe you're telling yourself, "This sounds interesting, but I'm already too busy and I don't have the time." Wrong! Many

young people involved in service projects keep up with their schoolwork, have jobs, get together with their friends, do chores at home, take part in school activities, and still have time to reach out and help others.

Maybe you're wondering, "What could I do?" Keep reading! This book is full of ideas for you to try.

How to Use This Book

The Kid's Guide to Service Projects contains more than 500 ideas for service for young people of all ages. They range from simple projects (running an errand for a friend) to complex projects (working to pass a state law that creates stronger penalties against graffiti).

Start by scanning the contents. What interests you? The environment? Politics? Helping people experiencing homelessness? Safety? Animals? Fighting crime? Literacy? If you pick an area that appeals to you personally, you'll have more fun, and you'll be more likely to stay committed and get the job done.

Once you choose your area, turn to that part of the book and skim through the ideas. Pick one that catches your eye. Then go to "Getting Started in Service" on pages 7–12. You'll learn how to begin, get the help you need, and evaluate your experience.

What if you don't find *the* idea that makes you want to get involved? Then use this book as a starting point for brainstorming your own ideas. Don't forget to check with your school, scout troop, or community group. People there will have many suggestions for service projects.

What's in It for You?

Why should you get involved in a service project? You may already know at least one answer to that question: Because it's the right thing to do.

If you're tired of seeing trash on your streets, if the thought of people going hungry drives you crazy, if you're worried about the world you're about to inherit, then it's obvious to you that *someone* has to do *something*. You can be that someone, even if you are "just a kid."

If you're sick of the media reports of kids who cause trouble—as gang members, drug users, vandals, and violent criminals—then you'll welcome the chance to prove that young people can be a powerful force for positive change.

If you're worried that your community is becoming an unsafe place to live, work, and play, you can help turn it around. A service project is a great way to bring people together. When people come together, neighborhoods are stronger. People start watching out for one another. Friendships form. Maybe your neighbor across the street, across the hall, or across the alley has ideas and skills to contribute to your project. Ask!

Imagine how good it will feel to know that your actions are making a difference in people's lives. Your self-esteem will soar, and you'll gain new confidence. Along the way, you'll develop new talents and abilities—leadership skills, organizational skills, public speaking skills, and more.

As you apply to colleges and look for jobs, you'll discover that admissions officers and employers are impressed by young people who serve. More and more colleges are looking beyond grades and test scores for students who give of themselves. More and more companies are encouraging their employees to contribute their time and energy to community service projects.

You might even find your life's direction. Many young people are concerned or confused about what the future might bring. They don't know what they want to be or become, often because they have little or no experience beyond the usual—family, friends, school. A service project can put you in touch with people you might not otherwise meet and opportunities you might not otherwise have. Your personal world will expand and grow in ways you never imagined.

You'll feel *yourself* growing in positive—and surprising—ways. Service gives us the chance to break down our preconceived notions and prejudices. Do you think that people are poor because they're lazy? Just wait until you get to know someone who happens to be poor. Do you believe that elderly people have little to offer you? Develop a friendship with a senior, and see. Do you sometimes have a hard time getting along with people of other ethnicities? Tensions tend to fade when people work side-by-side or reach out to one another.

Imagine the Possibilities

According to the most recent U.S. and Canadian censuses, currently more than 50 million kids ages 5–17 live in the United States, and nearly 6 million kids under age 14 live in Canada. What would happen if all of these kids, along with kids all over the globe, decided to start serving their communities?

Government solutions to society's problems and needs are slow and expensive. Young people are able to cut through red tape and get results while adults are still wondering where to start.

What gives you this amazing ability? Unlike adults, you don't know ahead of time all the reasons why something might not work! Instead of making excuses, you take action. You've got the clout—and the numbers—to bring about major social changes.

As you get involved in your service project, you may want to keep a journal. Write down the things you do for the project you've chosen . . . and write down what your project does for *you*. Record your feelings, experiences, and insights. At the end, you might describe how you have changed. Because you *will have* changed. You can count on it.

Service Requirements in Your School

In April 2009, President Barack Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, a bold expansion of opportunities for all U.S. citizens to serve their communities and country.

“We need your service, right now, at this moment in history. I’m not going to tell you what your role should be; that’s for you to discover. But I am asking you to stand up and play your part. I am asking you to help change history’s course.”

—President Barack Obama

One of President Obama’s goals is for all middle and high school students to do 50 hours of community service per year. His administration is working to develop national guidelines for service learning and to give schools better tools to develop programs and document student experiences. Schools across the United States and Canada are setting up service experiences

for students of all ages. Many high schools, both public and private, are making service a requirement for graduation.

But even if service becomes a requirement in your school, I hope you won't perceive it as something other people are forcing you to do. Then service becomes just another obligation—a chore. Instead, let yourself approach it with enthusiasm and dedication. Throw yourself into it. Get excited . . . even passionate. Then the requirement becomes secondary, the credit or school evaluation unimportant, because you're doing it for *yourself*.

I Want to Hear from You

If you choose a service project from this book—or if you use this book to brainstorm your own idea—I want to hear from you. Write to me and tell me about your project. What did you want to accomplish? How did you go about doing it? How did your efforts make a difference? How did your project change someone else's life? How did it change your life?

I have so much confidence in young people today. I know for a fact that kids can accomplish incredible things. I've seen it in my own classrooms, with my own students. And I'm eager to hear it from you. You can write to me at this address:

Barbara A. Lewis
c/o Free Spirit Publishing Inc.
217 Fifth Avenue North, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55401-1299

If you're online, you can email me: help4kids@freespirit.com

I look forward to reading your story.

Barbara A. Lewis

Getting Started in Service

Ten Steps to Successful Service Projects

1. Research your project.

Choose an issue that concerns you, and then come up with a project related to that issue. Consider these questions:

- What would I like to do?
- What might benefit the most people?
- What might make the biggest difference?
- What can I afford (in terms of time, money, etc.)?
- What is really possible for me to do?
- What _____? (Add your own questions.)

2. Form a team.

If you don't want to go it alone, or if the project seems too complicated to do by yourself, invite others to join you.

- Choose people who share your interest in the project and who are likely to stay with you until it is completed.

- Look around at your family, friends, school, neighborhood, or community for possibilities.
- Don't limit your group to people your own age. Invite younger kids to get involved. See if college students and seniors in your area want to help.

3. Find a sponsor.

Ask a responsible adult (teacher, parent, neighbor, community youth leader, etc.) to act as your sponsor. This can give your project credibility with other adults whose help and/or permission you might need.

4. Make a plan.

- Decide when and where to meet. You'll want to meet frequently to discuss your project, decide who will do what, identify any problems, and report on your progress.
- Decide how you will get to the meeting place and service location. Will you need cars, buses, adult drivers? You might need permission slips from your parents. Can you walk or bike there?
- Define your goal. What do you hope to achieve?
- Set a schedule. How long will your project take? How much time will you spend each week on your project? When is the date you want to be finished with your project?
- Estimate your costs. How much money will you need? Make a list of everything you can think of that might or will cost money. What about transportation? Materials? Equipment? Supplies? Photocopying? Postage? Donations? What else?
- Think hard about your project. Is it realistic? Is it too complicated? Too simple? How could you improve it?

5. Consider the recipient.

Make sure that the people you plan to serve really want your help. What's the best way to do this? Ask! Then find out as much about them as you can. For example:

- What are their needs? (They may be different than you think, and you may need to revise your plan accordingly.)
- When are they available? During what hours on what days?
- Are there any limitations or restrictions? What about special diets? Physical limitations? Allergies? Other health issues?

6. Decide where you will perform your service.

Will you go to the people you plan to serve, or will they come to you?

- If you go to them, be sure to visit the location ahead of time. Is there enough room to do your project? Does the location have everything you will need? If not, what will you have to bring? How will you get it there? Will you have a place to store things?
- If they come to you, make sure that your location has what you need.

7. Get any permissions you need to proceed.

Depending on your project, you might need to get permission from:

- your principal
- your teacher(s)
- school district personnel
- your youth leader
- your parents
- your neighbors
- community organizations
- owners of any facilities you will want to use
- anyone else?

8. Advertise.

Let other people know about your project.

- Make a one-page flyer (see pages 134–135).
- Or create a public service announcement (see page 139).
- Or send out a press release (see page 136).

9. Fundraise.

Do you need start-up money for your service project? Will you need to buy equipment or supplies? If you need to print 150 flyers at your local print shop, who will pay for the printing? If your project will cost anything beyond pocket money, you'll need to fundraise (see pages 146–147).

10. When your project has ended, evaluate it.

Reflect on your experience. Discuss it with your team, family, teachers, friends, and neighbors. Talk it over with the people you served. Describe it in a journal or an online blog. Write a poem, story, essay, or play about it; create music, dance, or art about it; make a video or audio recording. Try to address questions like:

- What did you learn?
- What did you accomplish?
- What were your feelings, fears, joys?
- Would you do it again?
- How could you improve it?
- Will you repeat it? When? How soon? (You might use your poem, story, essay, play, video, etc., to inspire others to join you.)

Using the Internet in Your Service Project

The Internet can be your best friend when doing service projects.

Go online to:

- find out about volunteer opportunities in your community or elsewhere
- locate the names, addresses, and contact information for businesses and organizations
- send out query emails, press releases, and other materials (see page 136)
- distribute online petitions (see page 135)
- connect with other volunteers via blogs, chat rooms, and other social networking sites
- promote your cause at your school's or organization's Web site
- create your own Web site, blog, video, or slideshow to promote your cause and to share your service ideas and experiences with others

As you read this book, keep in mind ways that you can use the Internet to enhance the projects you undertake.

Find Out More

Many groups and organizations promote youth service. Here are ones you can contact for information and assistance.



**Corporation for National
and Community Service**
(202) 606-5000 • www.nationalservice.gov

A resource center that provides information on service learning projects and state directors for youth service.

Volunteer Canada
1-800-670-0401
www.volunteer.ca
Canada's site for information on volunteering.

**NYLC (National Youth
Leadership Council)**
(651) 631-3672 • www.nylc.org

Leading the service learning movement for over two decades, NYLC offers information, project ideas, materials, training, and technical assistance.

Youth Service America
(202) 296-2992 • www.ysa.org
One of the largest promoters of youth service programs in the United States.