

Volunteering as a Family

Today, families are finding new ways to spend time together—and volunteering is one way to do just that! There are many benefits for families that volunteer. Research has shown that volunteering as a family:

- Helps families learn about social issues.
- Provides positive role models and passes on family values to children.
- Provides new learning experiences and development of new skills for both children and adults.
- Provides quality time for the family to spend together.
- Increases interpersonal communication and the problem-solving abilities of family members.

Planning for your family

There are a variety of issues for your family to consider before making the commitment to volunteer together:

- Your family may want to start slowly. Consider a one-time or short-term volunteer activity before making a long-term commitment.
- Consider doing your volunteer activity with other family groups (PTAs, religious organizations, neighbors or workplace groups).
- Consider volunteering as a family, but individually at different times— to allow for everyone's schedule.
- Make a list of questions and preferences before contacting the volunteer agency (for ideas for family projects, see the list on this page).
- If volunteering with children, ask about any issues related to their needs or safety concerns.

During the volunteer project

- Once you are involved with your volunteer project, talk openly with your family—including even young children—about your experiences.
- Talk about your experiences on the drive home, during meals or whenever your family has time together. Both adults and children will benefit from the opportunity to discuss everyone's reactions to the volunteer activities.
- Let your volunteer coordinator know if your family has any special concerns or problems, and discuss how you can work together for a satisfactory solution. Share your positive experiences, too!
- Keep a journal with photos and stories of your family's volunteer activities. Share the journal with relatives, co-workers and friends.
- Have fun! It is not only allowed, but it should be a requirement!
- Be proud of what your family has accomplished. Your family's self-esteem will continue to climb as you move on to future projects.