

FAMILY MATTERS

FAMILY MATTERS PROGRAM FACT SHEET

Family Matters is a national program of The Points of Light Foundation designed to strengthen families and meet critical social needs in communities through family volunteerism. Family Matters encourages volunteerism among families of all types and sizes, including parents, children, adult siblings, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and others who consider themselves a family.

Family Matters is based on the premise that volunteering families not only address community social problems, but also strengthen themselves. The focus of Family Matters in the past three years has been to increase the number of families volunteering together for the first time and to discover how nonprofits, educational institutions, religious institutions, and corporations could work together in six pilot sites. The primary program goals of this phase of the Family Matters program were:

- To increase and support the number of families volunteering;
- To increase and support opportunities for families to volunteer within communities;
- To show communities across the nation the value of family volunteerism; and
- To institutionalize the concept of family volunteerism in the United States.

Six sites were chosen to test various ways to increase the occurrence of family volunteering and to serve as models that could be successfully replicated in other communities and organizations.

Through the work of the local sites the following accomplishments were made:

- To date, 12,976 families have volunteered and have contributed 201,340 hours as a result of the Family Matters program;
- Over 421 partnerships with the Family Matters sites have resulted in the development of 1,498 volunteer opportunities for families to volunteer within communities; and,
- Media coverage has generated 205.5 million media impressions, reaching an estimated 123 million individuals with the message of family volunteering.

The six pilot sites were:

- Appalachian Communities for Children and Whitley Counties Communities for Children (Jackson, Clay and Whitley counties, KY)
- The Volunteer Center of the Texas Gulf Coast (Houston, TX)
- United Way's Volunteer Center (Minneapolis, MN) and Voluntary Action Center of St. Paul Area (St. Paul, MN)
- Mayor's Voluntary Action Center (New York, NY)
- Volunteer Center of Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)
- United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta Volunteer Center (Atlanta, GA)

An additional site was established through Target Stores, Inc. and their chain of 713 stores.

The six sites realized the potential that families had to address many of the social issues facing them in the community. In addition, the sites gained invaluable lessons in creating effective family volunteer programs, outreach efforts, empowerment techniques and partnership building.

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP & NONPROFIT ACTIVITY

Family Matters believes strongly in the importance of collaboration. The following partnerships have been established to increase family volunteering:

Target: Target Stores, The Points of Light Foundation and The Conference Board are collaborating on a three-year initiative to understand how family volunteering opportunities can connect family, business and community. A benchmark study was released in June 1994. Target has funded the program for a total of \$240,000 and learnings will be shared broadly within the corporate world. Preliminary findings indicate that benefits for employees include improved morale and teamwork. Results also reflect that family involvement demonstrates the commitment of the company and its employees to the community.

Gallup Institute: More than a third of all American adults do volunteer work with their families according to a Gallup Institute study commissioned in May 1994.

The Johnson Foundation & Wingspread: The Johnson Foundation convened a Wingspread Conference for the Family Matters Leadership Forum in January 1995. Attendees developed strategies to integrate family volunteering into the existing services and structures of communities and to increase family volunteerism.

The Communitarian Network: As a result of a grant from the Kellogg Foundation two case studies on family volunteerism, "Back to the Farm", examining Family Matters activity in Whitley County, Kentucky and "The Challenges of Voluntarism", focusing on organizational activity in Houston, were authored under the leadership of Dr. Amitai Etzioni.

PRODUCTS

Public awareness and technical assistance materials include: A program fact sheet, monograph of first year program activity (including initial research), "The Family as Volunteer: A Rich Resource" (an agency readiness brochure), "Uniting Families and Communities through Volunteering" (a pamphlet on the local sites), a 12 minute video on family volunteering, "Family Volunteering: Stronger families, Stronger Communities" (learnings from the 1994 Family Forum), family volunteering poster, Gallup Study on Family Volunteering, "Characteristics of Family Volunteer Programs" (Conference Board survey), local site profiles, family volunteer case studies, family volunteer activity list, "Reaching Out" (quarterly newsletter), "Putting the Pieces Together" (a workbook for engaging volunteer families through volunteer centers, nonprofits and the workplace) and various news articles.

FUNDERS

Funders include the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Lutheran Brotherhood, Target Stores, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, Chase Manhattan Bank, The Johnson Foundation and the General Mills Foundation.

FAMILY MATTERS

Family Matters Vision, Mission & Key Messages

Vision: To strengthen families and address serious community needs through family volunteering.

Mission: To engage families in a national service movement, by addressing serious needs in the community through volunteering.

Key messages:

Family volunteers can be effective in addressing serious needs in their communities.

Family volunteering strengthens communities and families.

Family volunteering is a learned behavior passed from one family member to another & one family to the next.

Reflection is an important part of the volunteer experience.

Family volunteering is a great way for businesses, agencies, places of worship and communities to engage more people in service.

Families from all backgrounds can be leaders and a tremendous resource for positive social change.

As a result of volunteering, families gain increased confidence in their communities and their role in the community.

Family volunteering can happen within or outside a structure.

Communities benefit when families play a leadership role through service.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GALLUP STUDY REPORTS OVER A THIRD OF AMERICAN FAMILIES VOLUNTEER TOGETHER

WASHINGTON, June 10, 1994 -- More than a third of all American adults do volunteer work with their families, according to a recent study by the George H. Gallup International Institute. Of the 1,002 households interviewed nationwide, 36 percent of the respondents report that they work alongside other family members to volunteer in their communities. The study was sponsored by The Points of Light Foundation as part of its Family Matters program.

For families in the survey, volunteering has become an ongoing tradition. Eighty percent of families who volunteer have been doing so for three years or more. Almost half (45 percent) of the families who volunteer do so several times a week (24 percent) or at least once a week (21 percent). This is true in all age groups.

"Community service is a major tradition for many families," said George H. Gallup, Jr., chairman of the Institute. "This survey suggests that volunteerism is an important part of the glue that binds not only the American family but the communities in which families live."

According to the survey, families with middle incomes are most likely to volunteer together. Family volunteering is happening among almost half (45 percent) of responding households in the \$20,000-49,999 income bracket. Children are actively involved in volunteering with their families, especially with adults age 35-49. Thirty-five percent of adults in this age group say they volunteer with one or more of their own children under age 12; 36 percent say they volunteer with their own children between the ages of 12 and 17; and 38 percent say they volunteer with children who are not their own. In 23 percent of these households, children initiate the volunteering activity and persuade other family members to become involved.

"In the past, people have been concerned that the baby boom generation was too busy climbing corporate ladders, then starting their families to be interested in volunteering," says Virginia Austin, who heads up the Family Matters program for The Points of Light Foundation. "This survey shows that they're finding time to volunteer by bringing their children along. Family volunteering allows them to serve the community, pass on important values to their children and experience a shared sense of accomplishment -- all at the same time."

While many families are getting children involved, the most common partnership for family volunteering is between husband and wife (60 percent). Volunteering with an adult family member other than a spouse is particularly common among younger people. Seventy-five percent of adults between age 18 and 34 say they volunteer with an adult family member other than their spouse.

A wide range of community causes benefit from family volunteering. The most broadly supported activities are helping older people (60 percent), children and youth programs (58 percent) and church or religious programs (57 percent). But nearly half of the families assist sports or school programs, and significant numbers are involved in environmental programs or assistance to the homeless.

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The Points of Light Foundation is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established in May 1990. It is dedicated to motivating leaders to mobilize others for community service directed at solving the most serious social problems facing society today.

The George H. Gallup International Institute is a nonprofit, survey research organization whose mission is to discover, test and encourage application of new approaches to social problems in education, environment, health, religion and human values.

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NEW STUDY FINDS FAMILY VOLUNTARISM BENEFITS FAMILIES AND CORPORATIONS

WASHINGTON, June 8 -- A trend toward family voluntarism appears to be emerging among corporate employee volunteer programs, according to a study released today by The Points of Light Foundation and Target Stores. Fifty percent of the 166 responding companies said they encourage family involvement in their employee volunteer programs. Of those companies, 57 percent began encouraging family involvement within the past five years.

The study, conducted by The Conference Board, a leading business research organization, marks the beginning of a three-year initiative sponsored by Target Stores to study the benefits of employee voluntarism to corporations, communities and the volunteers themselves. The initiative is part of The Points of Light Foundation's Family Matters program.

Responding companies which encourage family voluntarism indicated that there is a broad range of benefits to the families who participate.

- Seventy percent said family voluntarism helps families learn about their communities.
- Sixty three percent said it provides an opportunity for quality time for the family to spend together.
- Fifty seven percent said it provides positive role models for children.

(more)

- Fifty five percent said it helps families learn about social issues.
- Forty six percent said it gives families positive insight into the company and the workplace.
- Thirty five percent said it provides a positive perspective on the role children and other family members can play in society.

While benefiting the family in all these ways, 57 percent of the companies which encourage family involvement in their volunteer efforts said that involvement increases employee commitment to the corporation. Seventy percent said it improves public and community relations.

"We find all of this very encouraging," said Dick Schubert, president and CEO of The Points of Light Foundation. "While there is plenty of room for growth out there, there are lots of families and corporations proving that family voluntarism works. And they're reaping some important benefits."

While the companies encouraging family involvement tended to see more benefits to family voluntarism than obstacles, some did note challenges to overcome.

- Twenty five percent said it can be difficult to find appropriate activities for families.
- Twenty two percent said they have come up against a lack of interest among employees.
- Twenty two percent said they have found a lack of management interest.

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There are challenges for the families as well. Fifty two percent noted time pressures as an obstacle to families. Forty five percent said it can be difficult to coordinate family schedules.

"Our work with Target Stores and The Conference Board over the next several years will include the evaluation of various strategies to overcome these obstacles, and to get more families involved," Schubert said.

Minneapolis-based Target Stores is a quality discount retailer with 567 stores in 32 states. It is the largest division of the Dayton Hudson Corporation, one of the nation's leading retailers.

Family Matters is a program of The Points of Light Foundation created to strengthen families and meet critical social needs in communities through family voluntarism. Target Stores joins the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Lutheran Brotherhood, the General Mills Foundation and the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation as sponsors of Family Matters.

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Volunteering Ideas for Families

Opening Your Heart and Home:

- ♥ Organize a fund-raiser (run, walk, etc.) to send a child to summer camp.
- ♥ Volunteer at a summer camp for children or adults with disabilities. Activities may include leading craft projects, teaching swimming, sing-a-long, etc.
- ♥ Drive homebound residents to doctor's appointments, to the grocery store or to visit friends.
- ♥ Volunteer at a zoo working with the animals.
- ♥ Help build a home or shelter in your community or out-of-state.
- ♥ Build walk bridges, BBQ pits, picnic tables or trails at local parks.
- ♥ Open your home to host volunteer planning meetings with other families.
- ♥ Teach kids to swim.
- ♥ Become a surrogate family for adults who are develop mentally disabled and include them in your family activities.
- ♥ Take a homebound elderly friend to lunch or dinner.
- ♥ Bring your cat or dog to a nursing home to spend time with the people there.
- ♥ Become a foster family and take care of a child in your community who needs help.
- ♥ Coordinate a food drive for people in your community.
- ♥ Host a child/young adult for a portion of the summer.

Literacy/Reading

- ♥ Write or read letters to vision-impaired individuals.
- ♥ Create a family story hour and read to children in your neighborhood.
- ♥ Volunteer with a local council to help people learn to read.

Helping Hands/Sprucing Up Your Community

- ♥ Partner with another family to repair or paint the home of an older couple or a needy family.
- ♥ Organize a "window washing" or "spring cleaning", or "yard" day for a needy nonprofit or social service agency.
- ♥ Organize a community "closet" cleaning day/week and donate old clothes and other items to a homeless shelter or other organization.
- ♥ Plant and tend a garden for your neighbors.

Music/Entertainment/Crafts

- ♥ Perform a puppet show at a local library.
- ♥ Organize a sing-along at a children's hospital.
- ♥ Arrange youth history hour at a nursing home where older people talk with children about their own history.
- ♥ Organize a musical instrument drive and donate the instruments to a charity or community center. In addition, offer music lessons.
- ♥ Ask a hospice what entertainment they would like to receive and work either a family to organize the event.
- ♥ Teach craft projects at a local homeless shelter, adult daycare or summer camp.
- ♥ Organize and direct a play at a community center.

Advice/Current Affairs

- ♥ Attend a city council meeting with other families to express an opinion on a community issue.
- ♥ Write a letter to your legislator about an issue that is important to your family.

The Environment

- ♥ In towns where no collections are in place - collect recyclable (paper, cans, glass, plastic, batteries) and bring them to a nearby recycler or start recycling in your own community.
- ♥ Take your family out with other neighbor families to clean up the community. Select a nearby park, nature preserve, beach or other public area to beautify.
- ♥ Provide animal care/aide for community parks or nature preserves.
- ♥ Participate in a brush-cleaning hiking trip to help keep national and state park trails in good condition.
- ♥ Organize a community garden to beautify an unused plot of land.

Volunteer Vacation Opportunities

- ♥ Contact your local church, synagogue or medical aid organization about "mission opportunities". You and your family can provide out-of state or out-of-the-country support to families and communities. activities include medical/clothing drop-offs, providing building assistance, etc.

Family Matters is a nationwide program to engage families in a national service movement by addressing serious needs in the community through volunteering.

Family Matters is an official program of The Points of Light Foundation. Generous funding is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Chase Manhattan Bank, Lutheran Brotherhood, Target Stores, General Mills Foundation, Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and Johnson Foundation.

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Volunteer Profile: Los Angeles, California
Apolinar (Polo), Christina, Teresa, Apolinar Jr., and Marisol Yanez

Volunteering is a way to keep the dreams of family and community alive, according to Apolinar and Christina Yanez who volunteer with their children, Teresa, 12, Apolinar Jr., 9, and Marisol, 5. It teaches values and how to be productive individuals in a community.

Strong family ties and community value and involvement is exactly what the Yanez family is about. "There is a great deal of crime in our neighborhood, so our children don't go outside to play very often," said Christina. "Consequently, they are full of energy. We funnel these energies into volunteering where they help people while staying entertained and giving us quality time together."

The Yanez family is involved in many community activities including cleaning up the Los Angeles River where they collect garbage and send it out for recycling, raising funds for incapacitated children and adults so that they can receive transportation and other necessities, and participating in "Inner City Games" where they raise money and run to help inner city children.

According to Christina, volunteering has given her the ability to better relate to her children and has given her courage to speak up for herself. In addition, through volunteering, Christina is fulfilling her lifelong dream of teaching. "I teach other parents and children what I know," said Christina. "I am empowered by the people who listen to me and recognize the difference I am making."

"I like to volunteer because our whole family is spending time together," said Apolinar Jr., who is an active volunteer at the side of his parents or sister. "The thing that I learned the most is that my family is the most important thing in my life," said Teresa. "I know they're great because they are always helping others." Teresa, who enjoys helping children who are less fortunate than herself, hopes to be able to continue volunteering when she grows up. She only hopes that the crime in her neighborhood doesn't rob her of the opportunity to reach adulthood.

Polo draws strength from his volunteering, and it gives him a better perspective on life. "I've learned that the best school is life," said Polo. "And, that I have a lot to contribute to society."

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**Volunteer Profile: Atlanta
Ann Bersani and Mike, Tim and Kathleen Durkin**

Volunteering together extends the Durkin's focus to the outside world and gives them a better appreciation and more sensitivity to different people and situations. It is a way of life for the entire family -- Mike and Ann, 38, Tim, 9, and Kathleen, 4.

"The opportunity to volunteer together is an important aspect of our family," said Mike. "It blends our family life and brings us closer to each other and to the reality of different people and situations. Volunteering is not an abnormal activity for our family, for we enjoy participating actively all of the time. In addition to recreation, we budget time for volunteering."

"The spirit behind our family volunteering was most memorable last Christmas when we adopted a family from the local homeless shelter," said Ann. "We met a woman and her two children when we were serving food. Right before Christmas she was able to move into her own apartment. We gathered our friends and family and brought them furnishings and gifts to fill their new home. Everyone could feel the warmth surrounding the giving. The homeless woman told us she hoped that she would be able to return our favor to someone else one day."

Young Kathleen may not be able to put volunteering into the larger context yet, but she understands she is helping. To her, a smile tells all. Tim is an active volunteer both at home and at school and realizes the importance of service. In fact, he and his second grade class wrote letters to seniors in a nursing home several times this year. He also saves part of his allowance for the weekly church offering.

"Two years ago, as part of a United Way project, our family helped lay sod at the Brookhaven Boys and Girls Club. There was a great sense of community surrounding the project which was appropriately named 'Field of Dreams,'" said Ann. "It was a fun project for our family to do together."

Cub Scouts also plays a part in the Durkins' lives. With Tim an active member, the entire family supports him at pack meetings twice a month. In addition, Ann is scout camp den leader.

"It doesn't matter what you have, but what you give," said Michael. "Everyone has different skills, beliefs, and values, and everyone's individual contribution makes the community a better place to live. By balancing our time, we can all crank up the energy and volunteer together."

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Volunteer Profile: Washington, DC Concha, Morris, Gemal, Malik and Rashida Johnson

To the Johnson family, community service is a natural extension of life under one roof. Concha and Morris, with their children Rashida, Malik, and Gemal have been volunteering for as long as the kids can remember. According to Concha, serving others is a social responsibility -- every citizen should contribute to society.

The family has touched many people in many different ways. Much of their activity has revolved around their church in Congress Heights, Washington, DC. The family has helped with acolyting, liturgy service, photography, working with young people and coordinating activities. Concha serves as executive director of Anacostia Senior Citizens Counseling and Delivery Service, and she brought her family to help out with serving meals and assisting with mailings. Because of the family's commitment to community service, they are members of the Family Matters advisory group.

Gemal, the youngest Johnson at 14, has a deep sense of the value of service. "Sometimes my mom has to get me out of bed to serve on Sunday," he says. "Sometimes I don't want to serve or acolyte. I do a better job when I want to." His favorite service project was working for Martha's Table, where he helped make food for the homeless.

The Johnsons find ways to serve wherever they get involved. The family has been involved with Malcolm X Day celebrations for the past 20 years and Concha serves on the board of the Smithsonian Anacostia Museum. The kids attend three different schools in the Washington area -- Georgetown Day, Duke Ellington School of the Arts and Howard University -- and the family serves as volunteers at all three schools.

Morris, who recently passed away, was very involved with his family's volunteer activities. One year, Morris took Rashida, 19, and Malik, 16, to Honduras, where they spent their time repairing and rebuilding houses and schools. Rashida, fluent in Spanish, became the project interpreter, while Morris taped and filmed the events and Malik built desks and repaired roofs. Malik says, "I mostly spent time just trying to get to know people. I couldn't really teach them much. They've always lived with poverty."

In 1989, the Johnson family was selected as an exemplary family of service and honored by Congressman Walter Fauntroy. They have lived and worked in Washington, DC for the past 23 years.

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Volunteer Profile: Pennsylvania
Faye Kerin, Colleen Bender, Milissa Bender

A young boy entered the Salvation Army clothing store in the middle of winter, wearing only a light, spring jacket. Faye Kerin helped him find a winter coat and noticed the gleam in his eyes. "He was so proud of that jacket. It was as if someone had given him one million dollars," she said.

At 74 years of age, Faye fills her life by spending time with her family and helping others through the Salvation Army in Clearfield, Pennsylvania. Faye sorts items and operates the Salvation Army's clothing store together with her daughter Colleen and granddaughter Milissa. "We realize there is a great need for assistance in our community," Faye said. "And seeing the needy people coming in to the store makes us realize just how fortunate we are."

At a time in her life when many of her peers are slowing down, Faye finds joy in actively volunteering. She races between managing the clothing room, taking inner city kids to camp and cooking for the Salvation Army's Advisory Board meetings. "So many people sit back and think they're not wanted, needed or loved. When I help others, I feel wanted and needed," Faye said. "I feel my life is worthwhile."

Faye's caring and compassionate qualities are passing down to her children and grandchildren. "I am instilling in my family a love to help others," Faye said. "When you give with love, overflowing love comes back to you." Colleen, 43, has added these traits to her own value system. "I used to think only of myself, but now I like to help people. I love it when kids come in and I see their eyes light up."

Colleen and her daughter Milissa, 18, feel that volunteering has helped them open up to other people. Colleen said she was frightened initially but now finds great joy in speaking with strangers. "After volunteering and being around so many people, I am no longer afraid to express myself to others." Milissa added that she used to be very shy around people, but now participates in everything and feels more comfortable talking with many different people.

Milissa finds reward in influencing younger kids to do the right thing with their lives through teaching Bible school classes to children ages 6-12. She foresees herself working with children throughout her life. "Once I started helping other people, I grew to like it, and I now know that I want to keep doing it," Milissa said. "It's just something that sticks with you."

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Volunteer Profile: New York Eva and Rebecca Rosario

Public parks play an essential role in life in New York City. They provide areas for recreation, cultural festivals, concerts and plays, creating havens away from the everyday hassles of the bustling city. Prospect Park in Brooklyn is no different. Similar in size to Central Park, Prospect Park is a central gathering place for many surrounding communities. Volunteers are vital in maintaining the park for everyone's enjoyment.

Eva Rosario, 35, and her 14-year-old daughter Rebecca lend a hand in running Prospect Park's landmark carousel. As volunteers, they run the concession stand, sell tickets, work the entrance and exit gates and help small children onto the carousel.

Eva initiated the volunteering, but Rebecca had mixed feelings about becoming involved at first. Nonetheless, she signed on as an official volunteer for the Volunteers in Prospect Park organization. Since then, Eva has noticed an increase in Rebecca's maturity and independence. "It's very much like a first job -- developing a great sense of accomplishment and self. She now knows that she can work on her own," Eva said.

Which is exactly what she did one Sunday afternoon when Eva couldn't work the second shift. Rebecca stayed until the end of the day without her mom's guidance and learned how to close down the carousel and record everything in the books.

Not only has Rebecca learned new skills, but she has also developed helping values. "I thought it was important to teach my daughter to give to others," Eva added. In reply, Rebecca said she believes in this value. "I like volunteering because it gives me a chance to help others. I don't think that everything should be done for me. I am willing to help out without always expecting money."

Through helping at the carousel, Eva learned the reciprocal nature of volunteering. Although she is not paid for her time, Eva has found volunteering to be very rewarding. "Many of my co-workers are just embarking on their lives, and I feel I've made an impact upon them. They learn from me," she explained. "In return, I learn how to better understand my own daughter."

Volunteering is very important to the Rosarios in better understanding each other and strengthening their relationship. As Eva said, "At 14, Rebecca is beginning to drift away from me . . . like any normal teenager. But volunteering is one activity that we still do together."

Will they continue volunteering? Rebecca sees it as a part of her future. "I enjoy it so much now that I am sure I will enjoy it even more when I get older," she said. Likewise, Eva plans to continue working at the carousel in addition to expanding her volunteer efforts to include local health and literacy programs.

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**Volunteer Profile: Houston
Mary Ann and Brandon Barron**

Life in a hospital's pediatrics ward can seem sad and grim. But not if Mary Ann and Brandon Barron can help it. The mother and son duo bring cheer and smiles to the young patients at Hermann Hospital by playing games, reading books or just talking.

In addition to befriending patients and their families, Mary Ann, 37, and her 13-year-old son run the Pedi-Pals playroom, leading patients and their siblings through arts and crafts projects. "We entertain them, and they can forget about their problems for a while," Brandon said.

Mary Ann and Brandon make fast and lasting friendships during their visits. Brandon recalled his friend Sadaam, who was in traction for several months. "I wanted him to know that he had a friend and that I would be there for him to talk to about his feelings. He had several surgeries, and I was right there waiting for him after all of them," Brandon added. "I like to help other people and make their days happier."

Mary Ann takes great pride in seeing this side of her son. "I always thought he would grow up to be a lawyer or an athlete," she said. Instead, Brandon aspires to be a doctor so he can care for other people. "I never sat down with him and suggested that he become a caretaker. Little did I know that he had always wanted to help others. I was amazed that he would be interested in volunteering," Mary Ann said.

Children take cues from their parents. "What I realized was that our children may not always listen to their parents -- you can talk until you are blue in the face. But our children watch what we do and follow our example." And Mary Ann has set a caring example. Volunteering has always been an important part of her life. "Volunteering is all about loving people," said Mary Ann. "When I die, I want to know that I made a positive difference in other's lives."

"The process is its own reward," Mary Ann said. She added that she has probably reaped more rewards than anyone else. "I believe that 'The person loved the most is the person who gives the most love.'"

One of the rewards of volunteering has been a stronger relationship between Mary Ann and Brandon. "Volunteering has helped us to talk more. Now we are closer and happier with each other," said Brandon. "We spend alot of time talking about the patients and how their injuries will affect their lives."

As for Mary Ann, volunteering with Brandon has been one of the most rewarding experiences of her life. "Today, children don't realize how fortunate they are. We are both very grateful to have our health, and we realize our good fortune," Mary Ann said.

These realizations come at a crucial time in a teenager's life. With all of the temptations of youth, Mary Ann hopes that their volunteering experiences will guide Brandon away from the negative options. She hopes that he will take lessons learned from volunteering away with him as he develops his own morals and beliefs.

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Volunteer Profile: Houston, Texas Cathy, Demetra, Ume and Deana Thomas

Whether formally called volunteering or not, community service has always been a part of Cathy Thomas' life. "My mother was a very giving person, always doing something for others, whether it was taking food to someone who was sick or doing their laundry. I think it was that sense of giving that steered me toward volunteering," said Cathy, who began formally volunteering at the age of 14.

Cathy wants to pass that attitude on to her own children -- Demetra (16), Ume (14), and Deana (12). This Houston mother has volunteered alongside her children for six years now.

"My motivations for volunteering were selfish," said Cathy. "I wanted to do something with my kids outside of the routine grocery shopping or movies, and I automatically thought of volunteering."

As education chairperson for the Lupus Foundation, Cathy develops all of the organization's programs. Her children serve as greeters and hostesses for the events and work information tables as well.

In her professional career, Cathy is a program manager for the Houston Volunteer Center, and the kids help out at special events for the Center. The family helps Volunteers of America sort donated clothing or pick up donated items. Through their church, Cathy and the girls visit the elderly or make holiday gift baskets and deliver them to local nursing homes. During the recent tornados, Cathy and the girls manned phones late into the night.

"Volunteering is such a mix of giving and receiving," Cathy reflected. "Sometimes I get lost in the fact that I am volunteering." For Cathy's mother, giving was natural, and Cathy wants to teach that to her children. "Giving and receiving are very natural, very real parts of being human, and I want my children to learn both sides," she said.

As a mother, volunteering helps Cathy better understand her children by presenting the opportunity to really talk to each other. "Just this opportunity to talk is refreshing," Cathy said. "I may not always agree with my kids, but at least I understand their motives better."

As for the kids, they think it is fun to work and be together. Demetra said, "Volunteering brings us closer together. We have fun and get to spend time together, which is hard to do when everyone is always on the go."

Community service strengthened the family. As the children developed an enhanced sense of their own worth, they have become more perceptive of each other's needs. In addition, each child is strong enough in character to express her feelings, and volunteering has played a role in that development.

"Volunteering has called upon my children to express themselves as individuals,"

Cathy said. Ume added, "I could be a whole, new person when I volunteered. I could be a very mature person with the Lupus Foundation people."

"Once my kids learn their value as an individual with their own thoughts and opinions, they are not hesitant to express them," Cathy noted. As a result of stronger family members, the family unit has become stronger.

Volunteering provides the family with some fringe benefits as well. According to Cathy, they have enjoyed theatre shows and festivals while volunteering. "There were many things we could take advantage of as volunteers that we couldn't necessarily afford," she added.

Her children's view of volunteering has changed over the years. Initially, they thought their mom gave more to others than to their own family. But now, the definition of volunteering has grown to helping someone else, while helping yourself. Demetra's two-page resume reflects accomplishments through volunteering that have prepared her for upcoming job searches.

In addition, volunteering has replaced the traditional extended family to keep the busy Thomas family together. In a city where schools and churches are miles apart, volunteering helps them stay connected as a family with friends and family who may live across town through loose networks of people volunteering establishes.

"I think that volunteering will be something we will always share -- no matter how far apart we are or how much we will change over the years," concluded Cathy.

Families make volunteerism a tradition

Whitley relatives help together

BY GAIL GIBSON
SOUTH CENTRAL KENTUCKY BUREAU

WILLIAMSBURG — The much touted, much lamented topic of family values might have found a working definition in the Jones sisters.

The five women have been one another's birthing coaches. They care for one another's children. They prompt one another through personal projects, such as earning a General Educational Development certificate.

And, as a group, they volunteer when help is needed at Whitley County Communities for Children, a service organization designed primarily to help low-income mothers and children.

"It's just natural for us," said Sue Poore, 40, the oldest in the family, which also includes three brothers. "If I volunteer for something, I say, 'Come on girls, let's go.' And if they're volunteering, they say to me, 'Come on.'"

What comes naturally to Poore and her sisters in rural, southeastern Kentucky is slowly catching on across the country: Instead of volunteering as individuals, people are including their spouses, children, siblings or parents.

Family Matters

In six places, the Points of Light Foundation, a national orga-

nization that promotes volunteerism, has formalized that grass-roots idea into a program called Family Matters.

Two of the sites are in Kentucky: Whitley County Communities for Children and Appalachian Communities for Children in Jackson and Clay Counties. The other sites are in larger, urban areas like Atlanta, Los Angeles and New York City.

In the cities, families often volunteer through the program for a one-time event, such as a food



drive or a river clean-up, to get a taste of volunteering," said Donna Thurmond, manager of the local sites for the Points of Light Foundation.

Thurmond

But in Kentucky, the families involved are committed for longer periods, said Marian Colette, director of the Whitley County program. And they often are people who also use the agency's services.

"Usually, you think of volunteering as a middle-class or an upper-middle-class thing," Colette said. "You do something nice for

SEE VOLUNTEERISM, PAGE 20

The Hendersons — Rebecca, left, Lloyd and Peggy — prepare food baskets, which are part of the Whitley County Communities for Children effort.



VOLUNTEERISM: Families working together in Whitley

FROM PAGE 19

someone less fortunate. . . . Our whole mission is getting families involved in programs in the community that can better their own life."

So families like Sue Poore and her sisters — who first encountered Whitley County Communities for Children when they sought help from the maternal-infant health program — offer to stuff fliers into envelopes or to pack food boxes.

"It brings the family closer," said Omega Carr, 25, the youngest of the Jones sisters.

On a recent Tuesday, more than 30 women — mothers and daughters and sisters — gathered at the Whitley County building to plan a Christmas party for local children sponsored through the Save the Children Federation.

And families such as Della Cox and her sister, Eva Smith, volunteer their help to a program for families who operate small farms.

The work includes projects like building chicken coops, said Cox, who is also a paid AmeriCorps worker for the small farms project. In one case, they reroofed an older couple's home.

Looking for volunteer families

George H. Gallup Jr., chairman of the institute that produced a national study during the Family Matters 1994 Family Forum said: "This survey suggests that volunteerism is an important part of the glue that binds not only the American family but the communities in which families live."

The Herald-Leader Community staff is planning an article showcasing Central Kentucky families who volunteer together.

Send information, as well as any clear photographs of your family in action, to: Family Matters, Linda VanHoose, Lexington Herald-Leader, 100 Midland Avenue, Lexington, Ky. 40508.

Include a telephone number where you can be reached during the daytime.

"They need this help, and they don't have the money to do it, and Sam will say, 'Well, we could do it if we could get a few more together,'" Cox said of her husband. "And the kids will say, 'Well, we'll help, too.'"

Families helping families

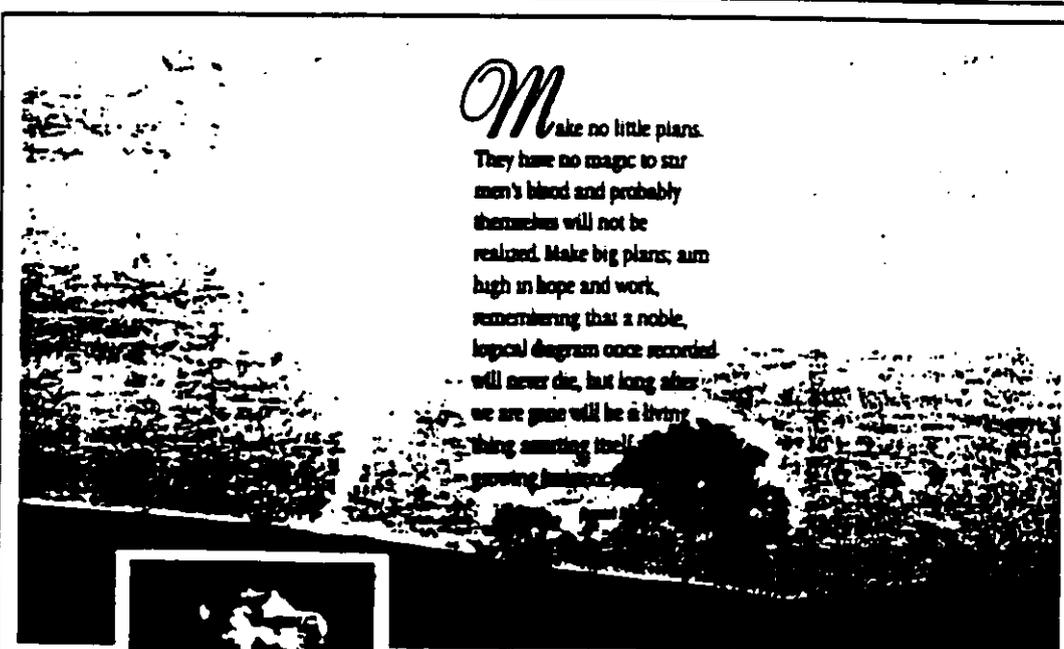
Cox, who also has received help through the small farms program, hesitated describing the projects, wondering aloud if that was really "volunteering."

"I'm trying to stretch their thinking on it," said Colette, who founded Whitley County Communities for Children and acknowledged that she was at first skeptical of introducing a formal volunteer program to a community where the idea of families helping families is still familiar.

"When you think about volunteering, it makes you feel good, it makes you feel positive," Colette said. "And it works the same for someone who has money as someone who doesn't."

"All of us really have a compassion for people in need," said Lloyd Henderson of Williamsburg, who volunteers through Family Matters with his wife, Peggy Henderson, and their 10-year-old daughter, Rebecca. "We've been through rough times ourselves, and we understand."

The Hendersons will pack and deliver holiday food boxes this year. They will set up a game booth at the children's Christmas party. There's always a need, Peggy Henderson said. And they consider themselves lucky to fill it together.



*M*ake no little plans.

They have no magic to stir
men's blood and probably
themselves will not be
realized. Make big plans; aim
high in hope and work,
remembering that a noble,
logical design once recorded
will never die, but long after
we are gone will be a living
thing asserting itself.



“Businesses in central Kentucky have a vital interest in the continued growth and

is a must to ensure continued economic growth of our Support of Bluegrass To

Past struggles have Ohmann family tree blooming with volunteers

■ To donate gifts or toys, call Santa Anonymous at 673-7074 or call Toys for Tots at 727-1335
 ■ To volunteer, call Margaret Lovejoy, Operation Joy coordinator, at 291-8346
 ■ To get help, call Operation Joy at 484-6244.

RICK SHEFCHIK STAFF WRITER

It wasn't so long ago that Cyndy Ohmann needed a little help herself.

Ten years ago, she was a single mother who'd just given birth to her second child. She was receiving public assistance and couldn't figure out how she was going to provide her children with any kind cheer during the holiday season.

"I really felt desperate," she says now. An agent at the Women, Infants and Children program asked her whether she was registered with the Capitol Cities Services' holiday program, which provides food and toys to needy families during the holidays, now under the Oper-

ation Joy banner.

"I didn't know there was anything like that," Ohmann says. "It was such a relief. I received a Santa Bear for each of my kids, and two bags of groceries."

Though Ohmann still has to struggle to make ends meet, she is on the other side of the counter now when it comes to dispensing holiday charity.

Five years ago, during another rough stretch, she picked up a holiday package from Capitol Community Services.

"As I walked out the door, I heard two staffers talking about needing volunteers to pack up the remaining stuff," Ohmann recalls. "I said I'd do it. They were sur-

prised."

She's been doing it ever since. Once again this year, Ohmann will take her turn staffing the Toys For Teens drop-off booth at Har Mar Mall. With her will be son Brad, now 17, who was the recipient of one of those Santa Bears 10 years ago.

Brad always volunteers with his mom. In some ways, the operation needs him more than his mother.

"It's always more challenging to find younger people who have the ability to do more of the lifting," says Karyn Thompson, Capitol Community Services volunteer coordinator. "One position we try to fill every year is having some people in place doing carryout. Large families are walking out of here with 14 toys and a large bag of food. We work Brad really hard, and he's a very good-natured young man. He's brought his friends along the last couple of years. They're big kids, too. And good kids."

Ohmann never doubted that Brad would be willing to give his time. That's why she signed him up to take a shift with her without asking him first.

"Brad is the type of kid who wants to do that stuff," Ohmann says. "I didn't even have to ask him."

Both Ohmann and Thompson think holiday volunteering is a valuable opportunity for parents to instill the spirit of giving in their children. Unfortunately, not enough families take advantage of the opportunity. Volunteers are needed year-round, and during the holidays they're needed sooner rather than later.

"I personally don't know any other families who volunteer together," Ohmann says. "I've seen husbands and

wives, but not parents and children. I think our kids are kind of getting used to not doing anything, and parents don't really make them."

Says Thompson, "We have a handful of families — six or seven — that volunteer together. It teaches the children, and they do learn a lot. For people who have integrated volunteering into their lives over the years, their children are able to understand better when they see it in motion."



JOE ODEN/PIONEER PRESS
 Cyndy Ohmann is flanked by Kevin Crews, Sheril Morrison and Ohmann's son, Brad, at Har Mar Mall's Toy Drop-off Booth.

Suggested ways to help the needy

For those seeking ways to help the needy during the holidays, the Points of Light Foundation, which encourages people to become volunteers in their communities, has a suggestion list from its Family Matters program:

- Read holiday stories to children and adults at hospitals and nursing homes.
- Become a surrogate family for adults who are developmentally disabled, and include them in your family holiday celebration.
- Adopt a refugee or immigrant family for the holidays. Include them in your celebration, or take part in their traditions.
- Take a homebound elderly friend to a holiday dinner.
- Write or read cards with vision-impaired people.
- Help repair or paint the home of an elderly couple or a needy family.
- Celebrate with a clothing or canned food drive party in your neighborhood. Collect items from your home or garage.
- Visit someone in jail, and get a list of gifts they would like to give to their family. Then go shopping, and deliver the gifts to the family.
- Sing carols with residents of a nursing home.
- Eat a simple meal, and donate your savings to a cause.
- Decorate a nursing home's dining room, hallways and rooms for the holidays.
- Offer transportation or company to people with disabilities so that they can shop for the holidays.
- Wrap gifts, fill out cards, and stuff stockings for people who are ill or physically challenged.
- Take the family out with other families to clean up the neighborhood. Beautify a nearby park or public area.
- Create a traditional environmental project — plant a tree every holiday season.
- Drive someone so they can be near family for the holiday season.
- Deliver meals to homebound residents in your area.
- Deliver coats, hats and mittens to needy families. Or, knit mittens, scarves or hats and give them away to the needy and homeless.

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LUCE PRESS CLIPPINGS

Volunteering proves a valuable learning tool for families



Even very young children may enjoy volunteer work.

Photo courtesy of OshKosh B'Gosh

BY COLLEEN DAVIS GARDEPIEZ

One chilly Saturday morning in 1990, as Teddy Gross and his 3-year-old daughter Nora were walking near their apartment building in New York City, Nora caught sight of a homeless man crouching against the cold.

"Daddy," she asked, "can we bring him home?"

"I was acutely uncomfortable," says Gross, a playwright and children's book author. "I explained that taking the man home with us wasn't really going to solve his problems. But that sounded hollow. I was raised in a tight-knit community, where people strongly valued helping one another. And I realized that I was doing nothing to help the homeless. I was uninvolved, and worse, I was setting a bad example for Nora."

That soon changed. As a result of Nora's concern, Teddy and his wife, Ruth, a pediatric neurologist, along with a gleeful Nora, began canvassing neighbors for pennies to contribute to organizations that serve the homeless. Soon other families joined the drive, heading out on what they now call penny harvests for Common Cents, a nonprofit organization founded by Gross.

In New York City the organization so far has raised more than \$300,000 for housing, clothes and food for the homeless. Inspired by Gross' examples, hun-

dreds of volunteers in Seattle, San Diego, and Chicago have begun similar drives.

"For me, this has been a transformative experience," Gross says. "Now there's an area in which I feel I'm actually helping. And family participation has been key." Nora, now 7, "loves collecting and sorting pennies with other kids. And we've learned something: Your children really do absorb your values when you act on them. Kids pay more attention to what we do than to what we say."

Practical idealism

In this era of double shifts and limited leisure time, the Gross family is — perhaps surprisingly — part of a national trend. In the harried 1990s, many more people are finding time for what Gross calls practical idealism, or volunteering, and they're including even their youngest kids when lending a hand at local food banks, shelters, senior citizen centers, community gardens and other projects.

According to a 1992 survey conducted by the Gallup organization for Independent Sector, nearly 100 million Americans donated time last year — up 17.5 percent from 1988. And a survey coordinated by Family Matters, a program to encourage family volunteering at the

Points of Light Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based not-for-profit organization, revealed that families are greatly involved in the upsurge of volunteering.

The reasons? Gretchen Van Fossan, national program manager of Family Matters, says there are several motivators. For example: "Parents want to pass on to their kids moral values of community action and service to others. They want kids to develop a nurturing spirit. And many parents feel they are building a stronger sense of family through volunteering — they're communicating in new ways."

Sharing responsibility for others and renewing a sense of family unity is certainly what volunteering, at its best, is about. Consider the family of Susan Feiring, wife, mother and environmental activist, of Sea Bright, N.J., whose four children ages 9, 6, 3 and 4 months have joined her on beach cleanups and environmental fund-raising drives for most or all of their lives.

"We tell our kids that we volunteer together because we care about the earth and all its creatures," Feiring says. "Before we go on a beach cleanup, I explain what kinds of refuse we'll find and how it got there. A lot of it comes from storm drains, so recently we all painted fishes on beachfront

See VOLUNTEER on Page 2

VOLUNTEER: A valuable learning tool for families

Continued from Page 1

drains to symbolize the sea life that is harmed by the careless throwing away of candy wrappers and used straws. My 3-year-old brings litter to the trash can, and the other two have become real environmental advocates. When the issue of pollution is discussed at school, my kids know a lot about it."

Read books, ask questions

Experts recommend that a day or two before setting out to volunteer, you prepare children in much the way Feiring describes: Offer some background information on the problem or issue you're tackling; Read a children's book that deals with the issue; or draw pictures — of an ideal community garden, for example.

Afterward, ask questions, such as: How did you feel when Mrs. Smith said she sometimes gets lonely at the nursing home? or: Why were the people at the soup kitchen hungry? If your children seem upset or concerned, talk about it, and remember that it may reduce children's anxiety about social problems when their parents show them how to help.

That's what happened in the case of Albert and Melanie Lamar in Jackson, Miss. They cherish the weekly Saturday mornings they spend reading, painting or coaching sports activities with their three daughters, foster son and 40 to 50 kids from low-income families. "Our kids have gotten an image of themselves as people who care. That means a lot to them,

and to us," says Melanie. "And we're so much stronger as a family than we ever were before."

Adds Teddy Gross of Common Cents: "For me, volunteer work has been a kind of idealism in action that I think we all — kids and adults — absolutely crave. Nora has a sense of community and of a kinder world, and has many friends she would otherwise have never known."

How to help

The following national organizations welcome family volunteers:

■ Common Cents offer information about collecting pennies for the homeless. Send a self-addressed envelope with a 52-cent stamp to Common Cents, 500 Eighth Avenue,

Room 910, New York, NY 10018; or call 212-PENNIES.

■ The Holiday Project, P.O. Box 6347, Department S., Lake Worth, FLA 33466; 407-966-5702. During the holiday season, volunteers visit residents of nursing homes, hospitals, and other institutions.

■ Meals-On-Wheels America counts on volunteers to bring hot, nutritious meals to homebound seniors. For information, write to Meals-On-Wheels America, 280 Broadway, Suite 214, New York, NY 10007.

■ National Coalition for the Homeless, 1612 K Street N.W., Washington, DC 20006, 202 775 1322. Volunteers distribute food, work in shelters or otherwise meet a community's needs. Call for the number of your

local coalition.

■ The Points of Light Foundation, 1737 H Street N.W., Washington, DC 20006; (202) 223-9186. The Family Matters program is collecting information about family-friendly volunteer initiatives in localities across the nation. Write for a list of family volunteer activities.

This article originally appeared in the Sesame Street Parents' Guide. Colleen Davis Gardephe is a writer and editor specializing in health and parenting topics, and co-author of the book "Don't Pick Up the Baby or You'll Spoil the Child & Other Old Wives Tales" (Chronicle Books, 1993).

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Illustrated by the Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Instill value of volunteering while kids are young

BY COLLEEN DAVIS GARDEPHE

Even small children can learn and grow from volunteering.

By age 2 or 3, most children can feel concern for another person, but at that age they may also feel distressed by such feelings. The best way to encourage empathetic behavior and reduce possible distress in a young child is to support the child's behavior and "be a strong role model of a person who cares," according to Nancy Eisenberg, Ph.D., Regents Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University in Tempe.

A toddler's attention span is brief, of course, so experts recommend

limited excursions early on: delivering a meal to an elderly person shut in at home, digging holes to plant a community garden, or spending an hour to clean up a local playground. After all, even a 2-year-old can understand the difference between clean and dirty and will enjoy helping to improve a familiar play space.

At ages 4 and 5, children develop a longer attention span, and parents may want to plan more sustained projects, such as monthly visits to a local nursing home, regular participation in a toy or clothing drive, or preparation of holiday food baskets for needy families.

Kids have better physical coordi-

nation by ages 6 and 7 and can garden, bake cookies, serve meals at a soup kitchen, or join parents on fund-raising walks. They can also help plan volunteer activities.

Gretchen Van Fossan, national program manager of Family Matters (a program to encourage family volunteering at the Points of Light Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization), says: "You don't have to organize and manage this kind of activity on your own. It benefits the children if they can take responsibility for helping to decide what the family should do."

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Illustrated by the Los Angeles Times Syndicate

IN THE

Spirit

OF

Giving

*As these four families can attest,
volunteering together is a powerful way
to find common ground with your kids*

BY PETER JARET

LAST SPRING, when severe thunderstorms created perilous flooding throughout parts of southeastern Houston, the Thomas family didn't have to think twice. Within hours, Catherine Thomas and her three daughters — Demetra, age nineteen, Ume, age seventeen, and Deana, age fifteen — were answering telephones at an emergency center set up at the local television studio. ■ “Everybody was frightened. People were trapped in their houses, and they needed to know where to go for help,” says







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Delivering Meals

TWICE A MONTH, Betsy Bannerman and her son, Cody, pick up twenty meals at a bustling kitchen in San Francisco.

Sometimes they carry away Mexican fare, or Chinese — it all depends on who's cooking that day at Project Open Hand, an organization that provides meals to more than 2,000 people with AIDS.

"Everybody knows everybody there, so it's fun. And we get to sample what's cooking," says ten-year-old Cody, a fifth grader who loves to read mysteries and play baseball. Cody helps load the car, and then they hit the road.

For Betsy, a single parent who works part-time as an educational assistant and a legal proofreader, volunteering is a way of honoring the many friends she's lost to the disease. "People light up when

**WHOEVER WE ARE.
WE'RE ALL ALIKE. I DON'T
WANT MY SON TO BE
AFRAID OF PEOPLE WHO
ARE SICK OR DISABLED.**

they see Cody," she says.

"They ask me about school and sports and stuff," Cody adds. "One guy we deliver to has a dog, so I get to play with him for a few minutes."

Betsy hopes Cody is learning how to empathize with

people less fortunate than he. "I want him to understand that whoever we are, we're all alike. I don't want him to be afraid of people who are sick or disabled."

That can mean lessons in loss. "One time we went to someone's house to deliver a meal and the caregiver said he had gotten too sick to eat," says Cody. "We had gotten to know him and everything. But we couldn't even go in and say hello. That was sad."

There are also lessons in love. "I know if I ever got sick and my mom wasn't around, I'd want someone to help," says Cody. "That's all we're doing — just what we'd want someone else to do for us."

Deana. One of the callers, she remembers, was a boy about her own age.

"He was so frightened I couldn't understand him at first. He lived with his mom and dad in a trailer that had flooded really bad. Everything they had was wrecked. Right then it clicked in my head that he could be me. That's when I really knew what it felt like to help someone."

Volunteering has always been part of family life, from the days when neighbors helped neighbors build houses or rushed down dirt roads to put out a fire. In the 1990s, the problems we face may be different — homelessness, AIDS, environmental threats — but giving remains a part of family life. More than a third of all American families spend time working in their communities, according to a recent Gallup poll. And in almost a quarter of those households, children are the prime movers behind getting involved.

It's not surprising that kids make great volunteers. As every parent knows, children tend to be enthusiastic about any job that lets them feel grown-up and useful, whether that means carrying someone's groceries, running a yard sale for a good cause, or cleaning up a neighborhood playground. Children are also inveterate idealists — when they find something they're passionate about, there's almost no stopping them. And they don't worry, as we adults do, that their efforts won't be a match for the host of societal ills we face at every news hour. In short, they believe they can

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Sheltering Animals

IN THE MCKINSTRY household, kittens frolic on the sofa and dart across the floor. "The kids love it," says Susan McKinstry, a professor of English at Carleton College in

Northfield, Minnesota. When their family's cat, Southpaw, was killed by a car recently, Susan wanted to help Ellen, age three, Dylan, age seven, and Ryan, age ten, get over the loss.

"They were so sad, especially Ryan. Southpaw slept in his bed, so the two of them had a special bond. Eventually I planned to adopt another kitten, but I didn't think the kids were ready. Then, I remembered the animal

shelter often needs homes for kittens who've been abandoned or orphaned until they're ready for adoption." She called the shelter, and sure enough, they had taken in four kittens, barely a week old.

"THEY WERE PRETTY UGLY-LOOKING, ACTUALLY. PLUS THEY SMELLED LIKE SKUNK," SAYS TEN-YEAR-OLD RYAN.

"They were so little their eyes weren't even open," says Ryan. "They were pretty ugly-looking, actually. Plus they smelled like skunk. We had to feed them from tiny bottles and put drops in their eyes."

Even Austen, the family dog,

did his part. "He licked them just like they were his own puppies," says Dylan. The kittens grew stronger, and the kids named them: Trouble, Taboo, Pookah, and Cheshire. Soon, the shelter called again, reporting that three more kittens had been found. The McKinstrys took them in. Now, they've adopted two of the first batch, and the others have gone to good homes.

"The kids are so proud. They saved lives," says Susan. The latest addition to the household is a scrawny cat named Wishbone, found starving near the airport. "Of course, we couldn't say no," says Susan. "And I'm beginning to think, well, three cats wouldn't be so bad."

make a difference.

Kids also tend to get a lot back from giving. They have a chance to work alongside adults in a setting that emphasizes sharing and respect. Spending time with people of varying backgrounds and abilities can broaden their perspective on life. And seeing the power they have to help out can bolster self-esteem. For families who work together, each new project presents a potentially fun and challenging way to find common ground.

"Donating our time has really been the glue that's kept us together as a family, even as the girls grew up and developed interests of their own," says Cathy Thomas. "All three girls have gained tremendous self-confidence — whether they're bagging groceries for homeless people or dressing up in their finest to host fund-raising events. And believe me," she says with a laugh, "they do love to get dressed up."

Working in your community isn't always easy. It takes time, and it can take courage. Depending on the work you do, it can bring you face-to-face with tough situations. How do you explain to your kids why some people in America don't have roofs over their heads? Or why some children get really sick?

The world can be a troubling and confusing place, but by pitching in, even on a small scale, your children learn that when people work together to solve a problem, things can and do get better. They understand that they have the power to create change.



Helping the Homeless

LINDA L. RAINEY remembers the first time she and her eleven-year-old granddaughter, Arielle, volunteered to help serve food at a homeless shelter in New York City. "She couldn't believe her eyes at first," says Linda, who serves as an assistant to the director of the Mayor's Voluntary Action Center. "I think she was a little frightened about seeing homeless people for real. On the way back home from the shelter, she kept saying to me, 'Grandma, they look just like us.' Right then, I know how important this kind of volunteering can be."

The next time Linda and her granddaughter returned to the shelter, Arielle insisted on waiting tables herself.

"Suddenly, she was very independent," Linda says with a laugh. "She was playing with

**ON THE WAY HOME
FROM THE SHELTER,
SHE KEPT SAYING,
"GRANDMA, THEY LOOK
JUST LIKE US"**

the little kids and making a fuss over the babies. She even volunteered to wash the dishes afterward."

For Linda and Arielle, volunteering offers a way to bridge generations. "These days, I think, too many families drift

apart," Linda says. "Parents barely get to see their children. Kids run loose and get into all kinds of trouble. Frankly, I feel blessed to be able to spend time with my granddaughter. And I'd like to

think I can teach her a thing or two, too — that I can be a role model."

Linda doesn't need to worry — she already is. A few months back, to acknowledge the contribution women have made to society, Arielle's teacher asked her fifth graders to write an essay about the woman they most admire.

"And who do you think she wrote about?" asks Linda Rainey, bursting with pride. "Yours truly. That's right."

"When you see the difference you can make for someone else," says Cathy Thomas, "I think it expands your sense of the possibilities in your own life."

As the Thomases and other families have discovered, encouraging our children's enthusiasm for helping others can help them to discover the best within themselves.

Getting Started

A CHILD'S level of interest in volunteering will depend in part on your own enthusiasm and support. It's also important to find a good fit between child and project or a charitable burst could flare out before you know it. Some questions to consider:

What does my child like to do? Choose a project he or she can get excited about. Build on a child's special interests, such as animals or the environment.

What are my child's strengths? If he likes meeting new people, for instance, he might like to help at a nursing home. If he's shy, steer him toward a project involving less social interaction.

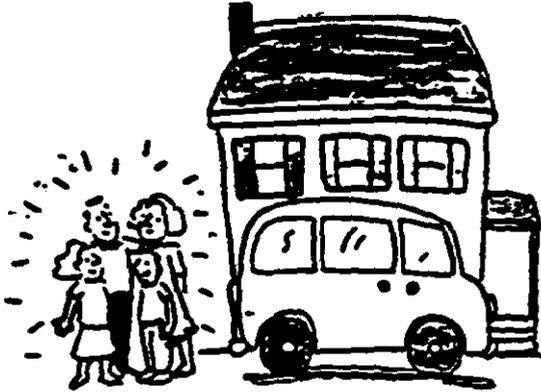
Is the organization set up for kid volunteers? Pay a visit before committing to anything to make sure the atmosphere is inviting to both you and your kids, and that there is plenty for a child to do.

How much time do we want to volunteer each month? Be careful that your project doesn't take too much time away from other things your kids like to do, so it always feels like fun.

Peter Jaret is a free-lance writer in Petaluma, California.

All the Family In

By Mary Phillips



Parents and children, siblings, couples, grandparents and grandchildren, and other individuals who consider themselves a family are finding that through community service they can strengthen their own relationships and improve the conditions of their neighborhood.

Family volunteering is not a new phenomenon. Families have been providing service to each other since the early days of our country. But the interdependence of family and community is increasingly being recognized as key to the survival of each in today's complex society.

The National League of Cities in its 1992 *Futures Report: Families and Community* emphasizes, "Family functions remain crucial: to provide a healthy and secure environment, to care for the next generation, to transmit values, to meet economic needs and to establish social networks and create community." At the same time, the report also indicates, "community is increasingly difficult to maintain under modern conditions, and that affects family life. Families depend on their communities and vice versa." The report goes on to say that children and adults who experience a close-knit, diverse community are being prepared to become "tomorrow's community builders."

Encouraging families to exercise their leadership through service in their school system, neighborhood, religious organization or favorite charity/agency provides adults and children with the tools to build community and address critical social needs. Children are provided with models of how they can impact their environment and contribute to the future. For example, in the Edgchill housing community of Nashville, TN, Brenda Morrow and her sisters Deb Stewart and Juanita Scrawther created Organized Neighbors of Edgchill (ONE), a coalition of residents, community businesses and civic groups. Through ONE they are empowering members to take pride in their community and restore a sense of cohesiveness to the area. Morrow says, "My family is the

community, and what we are trying to do is get the community working as a family."

A *Position Paper on the Family*, prepared for the Communitarian Network by J. Elstain, E. Aird, A. Etzioni, W. Galston, M.A. Glendon, M. Minow and A. Rossi, states, "Although the family is the locus of private life, it is also critical to public identity. Here as elsewhere, the testimony of parents and scholars converges: Families teach us our first lessons in responsibility and reciprocity. In the primary setting of the family, we either learn or fail to learn what it means to give and to take; to trust or mistrust; to practice self-restraint or self-indulgence; to be reliable or unreliable."

As families volunteer they provide individual members with expanded opportunities to develop their public identity. "When you serve other people," says



Elena Pereyra Johnston, "you keep your humility, and that is very important to our culture. What we aspire to is to maintain a sense of humility and dignity." Elena, her husband Allan, their daughter Sophia and son Noel, who live in Laguna Niguel, CA, have committed themselves to educating people who often are left out of the educational loop, such as Central American refugees, Mexicans and Native Americans. Mother, son and daughter tutor at the nearby San Juan Capistrano Mission.



Opportunities for family volunteering are diverse and increasingly are being developed to be flexible to meet family requirements. The spectrum of family volunteering includes:

- One-time events for the whole family, such as walkathons, park cleanups, gift baskets
- Agency-sponsored activities such as family mentoring, soup kitchen, tutoring
- Family-initiated activities such as clothing drives, neighborhood watch
- School/youth-sponsored activities such as PTA school fairs, health clinics, sports/fundraising events, environmental cleanup
- Corporate-sponsored activities such as Atlanta IBM's Hands-on Atlanta Day

For the Family:

- Provides additional time spent together as a family.
- Increases the sense of individual and family pride and cultural identity.
- Provides children with the "best" heroes or role models: their own family members.
- Provides learning experience and skills development.
- Increases interpersonal communication and problem-solving capacity of the family unit.
- Provides opportunity to address critical needs affecting the family or the neighborhood; families are empowered to make a difference and to "take back" their community.
- Passes on values and a sense of civic responsibility to each generation.
- Creates a history of "family memories."

For Organizations:

- Increases access to a larger, long-lasting pool of potential volunteers for years to come.
- Diverse families bring a broad, intergenerational

perspective that may help the agency address and respond to the needs of clients.

- Various ages and approaches of families may bring innovative solutions and expertise to help meet the needs of the agency.

- May increase availability of some volunteers — single parents, for example—if they are able to bring children along and do not need to find a babysitter.

For the Community:

- Families are sensitized and educated on community issues, service systems and the impact policy makes on the lives of individuals; in turn they become more responsible, participatory citizens and voters.

- Families volunteering increase the social networks and build a sense of community within and among the institutions they have affiliations in—schools, workplace, parks, civic groups, etc.

Challenges:

Challenges organizations may face in engaging families as volunteers include:

- Time factors: coordination of family members' schedules, extra time needed to design volunteer opportunities that meet each family member's need
- Transportation
- Old paradigms of staff or current volunteers who may be reluctant to involve families and/or youth
- Meeting or dealing with unrealistic expectations of family members
- Family issues or interpersonal conflict
- Liability issues

Tips for Assessing the Potential of Family Volunteering in Your Organization

(The following tips are excerpted from the Readiness Assessment Tool designed by the Volunteer Center of the Texas Gulf Coast, Houston, TX. For a copy of the complete Tool with resource list, contact Family Matters at The Points of Light Foundation referenced in Editor's Note below.)

- Does your agency/organization/community project:
- Currently recruit family volunteers?
 - Have one-time or seasonal events/programs/projects?



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Volunteer CHEER



**From serving holiday
dinners to gathering toys
for homeless children,
families find ways to reach
out to the community**

*By Maria LaPiana * Bee Staff Writer*

What goes around comes around.

Faith Diller believes this with all her heart. Sadly, she found it out the

hard way.

Eight years ago, her family's world nearly fell to pieces when, as she puts it, recreational drugs got the better of Faith and her husband, Tim.

Tim lost the job he'd held for 20 years, they lost their home and went with their children, Scott and Jennifer, to live with a relative. For the first time in their nice, middle-class lives, the Dillers collected government assistance and "shopped"

at a neighborhood food closet.

"We weren't homeless, but we were pretty close," says Faith. "It was really hard for the kids to understand why Mom and Dad didn't have any money anymore."

They're clean now. Both Faith and Tim are working. Scott and Jennifer are busy teenagers - and they're taking the time to give something back.

Since last year, when Faith learned of the need for volunteers at Loaves & Fishes, she and her family have helped serve holiday dinners and pack bags with food.

Please see VOLUNTEER, page F2

Getting your family into the giving mode

Giving is big around the holidays, but it's important to remember that people are hungry and in need all year long, says Virginia Austin of Family Matters, a national program designed to encourage family volunteering.

To find out where the need is in your community, call the Volunteer Center of Sacramento and Yolo Counties at 368-3110 or any of the community agencies listed in the annual directory published by the Community Services Planning Council (447-7063).

Meanwhile, here are some ways to get your family involved:

■ Deliver gifts to people who are

homebound.

■ Help repair or paint the home of an elderly person or someone with disabilities.

■ Hold a canned food or clothing drive in your neighborhood.

■ Read to the visually impaired.

■ "Adopt" an immigrant family.

■ Offer transportation to people who don't have any.

■ Clean up your neighborhood.

■ Eat simply for a week and donate your savings to a worthy cause.

■ Assemble food baskets or prepare meals for your local food closet.

— Maria LaPiana



Teacher Bob Kill sorts food at an Orangevale school with his wife, Gail, and their son Ryan. Bob is director of Metro Corps, a program aimed at curbing hunger among schoolchildren. Ryan also contributes by regularly cleaning out his closet to donate toys to homeless children.

Ben Owen Brewer

Continued from page F1

And having been on the other end of charity, the Dillers bring a special sensitivity to their volunteer work. When Scott, 16, packs bags, he likes to include cookies or candy bars, something sweet that kids in need don't often get.

Faith says that volunteering together has made a difference, and it has "given the children a new understanding that there are some people who are worse off than we were."

Need is by no means a seasonal thing, but it does tend to get more attention around the holidays. And while some families volunteer year-round, many make a point of giving more now, whether it be toys, food, clothing - or the gift of time.

Indeed, there are programs that operate exclusively during the holiday season, such as Christmas Promise - through which needy families are "adopted" - and the Holiday Project, which coordinates visits to hospitals and nursing homes.

There is much to be gained by volunteering, whatever your circumstances and the time of year, says Virginia Austin of Family Matters, an outreach program of the Points of Light Foundation. "It gives people an opportunity to see each other in different roles, to share a common goal and to reflect.

"It's also a powerful way to pass values on to the generations," says Austin, who is vice president of nonprofit outreach for the foundation, an organization whose mission is to engage people in volunteer community service.

There is a trend toward family volunteerism, says Austin, and countless creative ways to involve your loved ones.

In cooperation with their church, Jackie and Donald McGee of south Sacramento deliver food to the hungry - on the street, in

shelters, wherever they happen to be - every Friday. And they take their five children, ages 3 to 11, with them.

"I believe it's something we should do together as a family," says Jackie McGee. "It's something to keep in their hearts. It's important to do something with them that's not for the money."

"Too many young people just sit down, they just sit there," she says. That's not what she wants for her kids.

"Sometimes families come up with ideas themselves," says Austin. "There's a family in Colorado Springs that has adopted a Hmong family and become mentors." There's a clear benefit to the family being sponsored (in building up a sense of trust), says Austin; meanwhile, the sponsoring family is afforded firsthand knowledge of a totally different culture.

And you can't start too young, says Austin.

Even a 4-year-old can help sort toys collected for homeless children or pack bags with food. What's important is that young

people understand why they're doing it.

"I think it's important to have the larger discussion even with the youngest kids," says Austin. "Address the issues head on. Point out the homeless, talk about anybody in their class who they think might not get a present this year."

Do something tangible, and give children a say in the kind of volunteering you do, says Austin.

If you have four family members, give all four an opportunity to choose whom you help and how, she says. It can make a difference in the level of enthusiasm, but interestingly, kids are sometimes the "best advocates" for volunteer work.

Just ask the seventh- and eighth-graders who help feed the poor through the Metro-Corps program at Orangevale Open Elementary School.

The "Peace Corps in the neighborhood," as it is called by teacher and director Bob Kill, is aimed at alleviating hunger in school kids. Last year, 30 kids delivered 63,000 pounds of food to children

in need. The students who sign up for a period of work a day get much more in the bargain, says Kill.

It gives them a sense of community, an understanding of the people who are affected by poverty - and an appreciation that it could happen to anyone.

Kill is committed to the project in and out of the classroom - along with his wife, Gail, and son, Ryan, who will be 9 on Christmas.

Ryan helps out with Metro-Corps projects and regularly cleans out his closet to donate toys to families in need. He's developing a real sense of responsibility, says Kill.

"It's everybody's responsibility ... indeed, it should be everybody's pleasure to help out," says Kill.

And it can be a pleasure to volunteer as a family, says Austin.

"The real benefit is working on things together. It gives families an excuse to be with one another. It's active. It's pro-active. It's a creative way to spend quality time together."

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

Some nonprofit organizations get so many offers that they are forced to turn away people willing to help.

A feast of volunteers



Bob Donaldson/Post-Gazette

Mose Robinson works at Ray Seals' charity, Athletic Promotions Inc, yesterday. Last year, it was Seals' cousin Jonny E. Gammage who was doing the organizing inside the Steelers lobby at Three Rivers Stadium, making sure families received turkeys and boxes filled with all the traditional Thanksgiving trimmings. Story, Page A-25.

By Ellen M. Perlmutter

Post-Gazette Staff Writer

Nettie McKeen vividly remembers opening the front door on that Thanksgiving morning more than 40 years ago.

She and her seven brothers and sisters had expected to have dry bologna sandwiches for dinner. Instead, they found an enormous box overflowing with a fresh, cooked turkey, hot biscuits, stuffing and yams.

"Seeing the food — what that meant to me. . . I'll never forget it," she said.

McKeen, who was then 15, never learned the identity of the anonymous donor who visited her rural South Beaver home. But the kindness of a stranger who helped a family barely scraping by left a lasting impression.

Now divorced, retired and living in Center, Beaver County, McKeen provided a pickup load full of food for a poor family nearby this Thanksgiving. She did not want them to know her name.

"All I can say is that it makes me feel good," she said. "We all do good things because we want to feel good ourselves."

It is a feeling widely shared this time of year.

The spirit of Thanksgiving is so infectious, in fact, that nonprofit agencies throughout the region often cannot handle all the volunteer offers.

It is much the same across the country. "Volunteering on Thanksgiving has become so much a part of the American tradition that I feel guilty about going to my mother's house for dinner," said Arthur M. Smith, a spokesman for the Louisiana-



Nettie McKeen

"We all do good things because we want to feel good ourselves."

based Volunteers of America, a nonprofit ministry of service.

"We get so many volunteers calling that I have to turn a lot away," said Sister Liguori Rossner, whose Jubilee Kitchen will be serving two shifts of turkey dinners to the homeless today in the Hill District.

With 20 volunteers on each shift, the soup kitchen provides sit-down meals at specially decorated tables.

"I start getting calls in September from people wanting to volunteer. They want to bring their children, and I encourage that. With those we have to turn away, I give them alternatives, like serving on Christmas," she said.

Volunteers are appreciated, she said, and are needed year-round.

"I know it's difficult for them to come at other times during the year. I don't talk about my needs all year round. I take it in the spirit that it's offered," she said.

At the Light of Life Ministries, a North Side shelter, Susan Gartland worked out a three-shift schedule to handle today's 36 volunteers, some of whom will serve breakfast this morning.

"There will be a different group that will finish serving later, then stay and wash the pots and pans and clean up," Gartland said. "That way we get more mileage out of them."

She started accepting volunteers on Sept. 15, but has been filled for several weeks, including the dozens more who will take food to shut-ins at low-income high-rise apartments on the North Side.

"We ask them to come back for Christmas, or we tell them that we serve dinner every night. For some people, it is the beginning of service. But for a lot of people, it's time. People just don't have time during the year."

A national survey taken last year by the Gallup Organization for nonprofit organizations showed that there was a 5 percent

decline in adult volunteers in 1993 over 1992.

The decline of volunteers — from 94.2 million in 1991 to 89.2 million in 1993 — was attributed to a concern about the economy, said John Thomas, a spokesman for the national coalition of more than 800 voluntary groups and foundations.

But money woes sometimes take a break during the holidays.

"People mark their calendars to do special things at this time of year," he said.

Gartland got a call at the Light of Life from a single mother who couldn't afford a Thanksgiving dinner for her children.

"She's bringing them down to volunteer because she didn't want them to feel sorry for themselves," Gartland said.

"You have to understand that people [who want to volunteer] have stress at home. They're struggling, working longer hours. They don't have time during the year," said Smith of Volunteers of America. "So, it's incumbent upon nonprofits to create opportunities for them."

Duquesne University's Jim Weber, director of the Beard Center for Leadership in Ethics, believes that volunteering in soup kitchens is as important to business students as their education, so he requires his class to volunteer for at least 15 hours a semester at local nonprofit agencies.

"Some have said they'd like to continue after the class is over," he said, pleased that he may have kindled some long-lived enthusiasm for volunteerism.

"Channeling the energy becomes a challenge. It's a big job, trying to match people with availability and needs," said Salvation Army Major Karen Satterlee, who oversees volunteer programs.

While her agency needed no more servers for Thanksgiving meals today, she was able to talk at least one couple into ringing the Salvation Army bell for donations in Braddock.

At the Voluntary Action Center in Rochester, executive director Darla LaValle, who found a family for McKeen's donation, broke into tears while discussing the generosity of donors during the holidays.

Throughout the year, the center concentrates on providing furniture and hospital equipment for the needy.

During the holiday season, LaValle, wife of state Sen. Gerald LaValle, D-Rochester, focuses on delivering food and toys to the poor.

"We have people walk in with groceries and food certificates. It's wonderful," she said.

"I was at [the grocery store], and I ran into a lot of people I know. They saw that I was buying food certificates, and that brings an awareness. I think if we get the message out there, we'll encourage people to help."