



volunteer centres

Ionaid d'Oibrí Deonacha na hÉireann

IRELAND

# family volunteering

## a step by step guide

Family volunteering occurs when family members volunteer together in community service activities. They may come from different generations in combinations such as parent/child or grandparent/parent/child, or from same generation, such as adult partners, or brother/sister.



### Why do or would families volunteer?

A very strong reason for families to volunteer together is that parents want to raise their children to believe that everyone has a responsibility to their family, friends, neighbours and community. All families that volunteer make a conscious effort to be active and to meet with others with similar values. Families are also aware that volunteering is an activity that can help build & sustain relationships within the family unit.

"It's a tremendously bonding experience to share something as fulfilling as helping meet another person's need with other members of your family. How could parents better teach their children values?"

### how families benefit from volunteering

- They gain a shared sense of accomplishment and satisfaction from giving back to the community.
- Volunteering creates positive role models for children and youths.
- Volunteering builds the self-confidence of family members.
- Volunteering creates a history of family memories.
- Volunteering makes families feel valued.
- Families can make new friends.
- Volunteering develops family pride.

### how communities benefit from family volunteering

- Volunteering offers a potential for on-going change. Children who volunteer become adults who volunteer.
- Volunteering teaches the value of service and involvement in the community.
- Families become more responsible and involved.
- Families help to build an active community.
- Families have potential for finding solutions to their communities problems.

## helpful hints on family volunteering

- Talk openly with your family about the experience. Encourage all family members in their efforts.
- Have fun! Enjoy spending time with your family.
- After your family volunteers, talk about the experience at home, over dinner, or anytime.
- Keep a diary of your family volunteering. Have family members take turns writing about their experiences.
- Create a family volunteering calendar to plan your volunteer work. Get input from all family members in planning future activities.
- Encourage other families in your school, community or workplace to participate with you.
- Be proud of what your family has accomplished!

*Adapted from Volunteering as a Family (United Way of Metropolitan, Atlanta, 1996)*

**"Family volunteering is a unique win-win-win situation where the volunteer, the organisation and the community can benefit equally."**

## preparation tips

- Start slowly. Consider onetime or short-term activities before making a long-term commitment
- Involve all family members in the planning process.
- Consider doing your family volunteer activity with other families in your school, neighbourhood or workplace.
- Research your selected volunteer opportunity. Get information about the time, place, age and skills requirements, and safety considerations.
- Attend orientation and training sessions. These will help you understand the organisation and your role as a volunteer.

**"As early as 1987, a survey by American firm J.C. Penney Company Inc. revealed that 55% of non-volunteers felt that involving their families would be an important incentive to getting them to volunteer."**

## volunteering ideas for families

- Inviting a housebound or elderly neighbour for dinner.
- Shopping for a housebound person.
- Getting involved in the Special Olympics.
- Donating clothes or toys.
- Helping clean the local environment.
- Helping at a shelter or soup kitchen.
- Writing for a community newsletter.
- Painting and making repairs at a community centre.
- Delivering meals on wheels.
- Helping with Christmas Hampers.
- Walking or caring for animals.
- Reading and writing letters for those who need assistance.
- Visiting a nursing home on family trips.
- Getting involved in community theatre or sports.
- Helping those new in the community to locate and access the resources they need.
- Giving blood.
- Organising fund-raising events for good causes.
- Developing a family-to-family relationship with those new to the community, such as family-to-family mentoring.

**For more ideas, contact your local volunteer centre!**

**Either drop in or give them a call and they will be happy to chat through your options for volunteering as a family and discuss any issues you may have. Your local volunteer centre can be contacted at the following address:**