

Tips For Encouraging Children To Volunteer

(NAPSA)—When it comes to volunteering, America's young people are all business.

Fifty-five percent of U.S. teenagers volunteered in just one year, according to a report from the Corporation for National & Community Service. Additionally, the group says that community service in U.S. schools has reached a new high, as 68 percent of kindergarten through 12th-grade schools now offer or recognize service opportunities for students.

And as more youngsters continue to get involved, it's not just people in need who benefit. Experts say helping others can offer young people a host of rewards, from a stronger sense of community to improved self-esteem. Plus, volunteering can help bulk up a college application or a résumé. So how can you encourage your children to volunteer? Try these tips:

Get Involved

It seems charity really does begin at home. The Corporation for National & Community Service says that nearly nine out of 10 young people who give their time have parents and siblings who also volunteer. Find ways to help the community and children will likely follow your lead.

Consider having a monthly "family day of service" when the whole household picks a cause to support, or setting an annual family fundraising goal for a specific charity. The key is to keep it fun and to keep everyone involved.

Follow Their Interests

Ask your children which causes might be of greatest interest to them. They'll be more likely to fully commit to volunteering if it's in an area they care about. If your



Young people of all ages and abilities have made a difference in their communities.

daughter's an animal lover, for instance, she might want to help raise money for an area zoo or rescue shelter. If your son loves sports, he might enjoy organizing an area park cleanup or, if he's old enough, helping out a local youth team.

Clean House

Encourage your children to give old toys, games and other items that they no longer use to charity. Then ask kids to help you do the same.

Root through dresser drawers and closets together to find old clothing you might give away. Doing so can be a fun way to spend time with your children as you make a difference.

Added Benefits

Work with your children to find ways to make volunteering even more rewarding. For instance, the Build-A-Bear Workshop Huggable Heroes program recognizes young

people between the ages of 8 and 18 who give back in their communities and beyond. Youngsters are rewarded with scholarships, charitable contributions, networking opportunities and leadership training.

Kids can also host a charity bear-making party at one of the company's stores. The animals they make can be donated to an area hospital, or children can make one of several special stuffed animals to help support important causes including animal shelters, the World Wildlife Fund, children's literacy initiatives, and children's health and wellness programs.

To nominate someone for the Huggable Heroes program, visit www.buildabear.com/huggableheroes or pick up an entry form at a Build-A-Bear Workshop store. Entries will be accepted through February 26.