



# KEEP 'EM READING

## AWAKENING THE VOLUNTEER

To volunteer is to help with no expectations for reward. Helping can take the form of small actions, like loaning a pencil or playing with a lonely classmate. Students can help set up chairs for a meeting or tutor younger students after school. Once children experience these small unselfish acts, they may be more inclined to tackle larger volunteering projects.

According to the United Way, volunteering enhances social development and self-esteem. It encourages healthy choices and teaches social responsibility. Children who volunteer are more likely to continue volunteering as adults, thus helping to advance the common good in our communities.

### Little Acts of Kindness

#### Grades K-5

Volunteering takes many forms, but it starts with a desire to help. Taking

small but deliberate actions in a consistent way can develop a whole student body that is conscious of other's needs.

Since adding another responsibility to a busy classroom teachers' day is a hard sell, start with simple suggestions to create a positive classroom environment that will integrate into current curriculum.

Explore simple acts of kindness that take place in your school everyday. Provide small paper "bricks" on which students can write about the kind acts they witness at school. Post the bricks to a "Compassion Wall."

Build on these observations by letting students search for additional ideas on the Random Acts of Kindness website (<http://tinyurl.com/9ddev9a>). Challenge students to find five acts of kindness they want to accomplish in the upcoming week. Give each student a cutout of a hand and have them write one kind act on each finger. Create an outline of a tree on a wall. When the kindnesses have

been accomplished, the hands can be added as leaves on the Kindness Tree.

After students have practiced kindness for several weeks, ask for their reflections. How did they feel when performing the kindnesses?

Speculate on the meaning of the phrase "Pay it forward." Use one or more of the following books to illustrate the phrase's meaning:

- *Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson.
- *Because Brian Hugged His Mother* by David Rice
- *One Smile* by Cindy McKinley
- *Kindness Is Cooler, Mrs. Ruler* by Margery Cuyler
- *The Kindness Quilt* by Nancy Wallace
- *Heartprints* by P.K. Hallinan

Ask students how each of the books illustrates the phrase's meaning. Encourage the use of text examples during discussion. The Pay It Forward website ([www.pifexperience.org](http://www.pifexperience.org)) is available for teacher reference as well.

GRADES  
1-5

## Community Volunteering

### Just Like You

#### Grades K-1

Read *Just Critters Who Care* by Mercer Mayer. Ask students to think about a time when they or their family helped a neighbor, another person, or a family member. Draw a picture of the experience and write a caption for the picture.

### The Chain Effect

#### Grades 2-3

Books open doors to a multitude of volunteering possibilities by showing kids that there are volunteer opportunities for every interest, talent, and passion. The I Can Make a Difference series from Heinemann includes volunteering to help animals, family and friends, the community, and the environment. Each book discusses the purpose of volunteering and describes simple tasks children can do. Use all four books in the series or find similar books from your collection that will assist students in developing ideas for volunteering. (Remind students about using nonfiction text features to find information.)

Split students into four groups. Give books on one topic to each group of students and distribute a paper doll cutout ([www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)) to each student. The students should write one volunteering idea on each paper doll. Tape the paper dolls together after students read the tasks to the class. Create chains for each of the topics and post where other classes can read the ideas. Spend time as a whole class sharing ideas about why it is good to volunteer.

### Do It Yourself

#### Grades 4-5

Once students are aware of volunteering, expand their horizons

“No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.” ~ Aesop

with additional volunteer possibilities. Individuals or small groups especially interested in organizing a volunteer group may find a wealth of information in *Cool School Volunteering* by Karen Kenney. Librarians can also share novels that include a volunteer theme (see suggestions at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)).

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## Environmental Kindness

### Green Earth Volunteers

#### Grades K-5

Little acts of green kindness are easy to identify and do with children of all ages. Choose a nonfiction environmental book for read-aloud and discussion (see suggestions at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com))

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Engage the class in conversations about positive environmental actions that can take place at home or school. Create a large poster titled “Green Volunteers.” Have students sign their names, pledging their time and energy to make the earth a greener place.

### Clean It Up

#### Grades 1-3

In Alison Formento’s picture book *These Seas Count!*, Mr. Tate’s class learns

about beach and ocean pollution and are introduced to ten sea animals. The effects of pollution on these animals can segue into a simple library research lesson and create interest in environmental clean up.

In pairs, have students research an animal mentioned in the story. This would be a good time to teach a mini-lesson on how the books about plants and animals in the 500s section are organized on the shelves. Provide students with the general Dewey number for birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, mollusks, and plants. If these subcategories are already labeled on the shelves, alert students to that as well.

Offer another reminder or mini-lesson about choosing books at the appropriate reading level. Using the general numbers, students can go to the shelves and scan the titles to find books on the desired subject. After books are located, let students browse to find those closest to their reading level.

Focus the research project on one question (e.g., How has pollution affected the life of X?) so it can be accomplished in one or two class periods. Introduce or review identifying keywords in the question.

## Volunteer Checklist

From: *Helping in the Community* by Vic Parker, Heinemann Library 2012

To be a good volunteer, you need to:

- Be friendly
- Suggest ideas, but listen to others
- Share and take turns, if you are in a team
- Keep your promises
- Treat other people the way you would like to be treated
- Be interested and have lots of energy

Direct students to list possible synonyms for the keywords and search for the words in the indices of the books. Remind them that they need to read only pages pertaining to their keywords. When the information is found, students can create a graphic storyboard about that answers the research question.

Have students share their information orally and then extend the discussion to what the class can do to help the environment. Assist students in making the connection that, just like Mr. Tate's class, they can make a difference in their own environment. Make a class list of possible actions to improve the environment. For comprehensive teaching suggestions for Formento's book, see <http://tinyurl.com/kfcacmb>.

### Kindness to Animals Grades 2–3

Students can encourage their families to foster cats and dogs until a forever home is found. Scholastic has two easy reader series, The Puppy Place and Kitty Corner, that allow for individual book choice while containing similar themes. Let students choose a book from either series for independent reading. Have students record their thoughts about the text as it relates to themselves, other texts, or the world. The Education Oasis website (<http://tinyurl.com/2dnmf7>) offers free downloadable graphic organizers for each type of response.

## Making a Difference

### The Real Deal Grades 3–5

Highlight people whose volunteering has made a positive impact on our world. Read about Clara Barton in the picture book *Clara and Davie* by Patricia Polacco. Invite students to

discuss the events that led Barton to her work. The US National Park Service has online unit on Barton (<http://tinyurl.com/n7s4vnz>).

This lesson can lead into a biography unit about other famous volunteers. Have students choose biographies of people who match their interests. While reading, students should note the important turning points or triggers that led to the individual's acts of kindness.

### Volunteer Stars Grades 4–5

Extend the biography activity to include students interviewing local volunteers. View the short YouTube video interview of a football team that executed a very special play that enabled a child with a disability to score a touchdown (<http://tinyurl.com/l6vwssz>). Discuss what the team did, why they did it, and the results. Watch it a second time to focus on the questions asked by the interviewer. Compile a list of questions that students can use when interviewing a volunteer.

Invite parent volunteers from the school or reach out to community organizations. Have students work in

pairs to interview a volunteer, write up a summary ([www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)), and present their findings to the class. Spotlight these wonderful volunteers by posting the summaries and a picture of the volunteer on a Volunteer Star Wall.

Reading books that promote volunteering, generating ideas for helping others, and modeling acts of kindness can benefit the entire school and ensure a legion of future volunteers.

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“Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead