

## **TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN HOW TO GIVE BACK**

It is never too early to teach children about giving. Instill in your children a charitable nature that will grow with them and encourage them to make charity a lifetime goal. The holidays are a great time to introduce the concept of generosity to children and to teach them the joys of giving.

### **Infants: 0-12 months**

- From the very beginning, infants are shaping their view of the world and their place in it. A strong foundation of trust, built in a loving and caring environment, is the first step in philanthropy/charity. At its most basic level, philanthropy/charity is the love of mankind. During their early years, children learn about love by being loved. They learn the role of rules in a community by having rules set at home. They learn about consequences, fairness, tolerance, altruism, justice, giving, sharing, and caring during their years in this most important community—the family.
- If you are planning to do some charitable activities in the community, consider whether or not it is safe and appropriate to bring your infant. It may be better to secure a good babysitter to ensure that your infant is in a safe environment while the rest of the family helps out in a homeless shelter, soup kitchen, etc.

### **Toddlers: 1-2 years old**

- Read picture books with messages about sharing and giving.
- Incorporate giving and sharing into family activities.
- Discuss family beliefs and traditions of giving and sharing with your toddler.
- Talk with your child about why your family cares.
- Help your child begin to take on small responsibilities at home.
- Teach love to your child by modeling caring and loving.

### **Preschoolers: 3-5 years old**

- Use opportunities during your children's playtime with other children or imaginary friends to teach sharing and caring behavior.
- Consider bringing your preschool child along when you participate in charitable events, as long as the event is safe and appropriate for young children.
- Spend family time volunteering or otherwise giving and sharing together. A few ideas: visit elderly friends and take them flowers; bring refreshments to a Habitat for Humanity worksite; cook a meal and deliver it to a shut-in or friend; visit a nursing home and read a book with a resident; make small gifts as a family, then

deliver to a shelter or to a friend. These are only a few ideas – you and your family can come up with many more!

- Read books with philanthropic content about giving and sharing.
- Encourage your child's school to incorporate giving/volunteering into the curriculum.
- Tell family stories of sharing including both giving and receiving.
- Visit museums and focus on heroic figures that have benefited your community or society.
- Talk with your child about why your family cares.
- Develop a family "Caring Container" of activities. Use a basket or other container to hold slips of paper listing different sharing activities that your family can do. When looking for something to do, pick out a slip of paper and do that activity!
- Help your child think of a person in the community whom he/she would like to thank or honor. Then let him/her make a card or small gift for this person, and take him/her to deliver it.
- Gather and deliver excess toys and clothes to a shelter or program for needy children.
- Be a role model of giving and serving.

### **School age children: 6-8 years old**

- Spend family time volunteering or otherwise giving and sharing together. A few ideas: visit elderly friends and take them flowers; bring refreshments to a Habitat for Humanity worksite; cook a meal and deliver it to a shut-in or friend; visit a nursing home and read a book with a resident; make small gifts as a family, then deliver to a shelter or to a friend. These are only a few ideas – you and your family can come up with many more!
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- Gather and deliver excess toys and clothes to a shelter or program for needy children.
- Be a role model of giving and serving.
- Hold family discussions on issues related to giving.

- Help your child think of a person in the community whom he/she would like to thank or honor. Then let him/her make a card or small gift for this person, and take him/her to deliver it.
- Encourage your children to come up with their own ideas about how to help others. Help them make their ideas reality!

### **School age children: 9-12 years old**

- Read books with philanthropic content about giving and sharing.
- Hold family discussions on issues related to giving.
- Tell family stories of sharing including both giving and receiving.
- Discuss actions of public figures who demonstrate giving and sharing.
- Encourage your child's school to incorporate giving/volunteering into the curriculum.
- Visit museums and focus on heroic, philanthropic figures.
- Talk with your child about why your family cares.
- Discuss lessons from history and their relationship to philanthropy.
- Discuss current events related to caring about and giving to others.
- Build a birdhouse or a bat house and use the activity as an opportunity to discuss homelessness.
- Enjoy family volunteer activities together.
- Keep a philanthropy journal or scrapbook.
- Become involved in a service project with a nonprofit organization.
- Create a charity jar in which your child can place part of her allowance each week until the jar is full. Then choose a charity for donation.
- Write a letter to a soldier stationed in Iraq or Afghanistan.
- Gather and deliver excess toys and clothes to a shelter or program for needy children.
- Be a role model of giving and serving.
- Encourage your children to come up with their own ideas about how to help others. Help them make their ideas a reality!

### **Adolescents: 13 and up**

- Ask your child to research charitable organizations that deal with issues that interest him. Then help him or her come up with a way that he or she can contribute to one or more of these organizations.
- Put your child in charge of household "collection." Ask her or him to sift through the family's closets and belongings (with everyone's permission, of course) to choose unused goods to donate to a shelter or other charitable institution.
- Hold family discussions on issues related to philanthropy.

- Tell family stories of sharing including both giving and receiving.
- Discuss actions of public figures who demonstrate giving and sharing.
- Discuss lessons from history and their relationship to philanthropy.
- Discuss current events related to caring about and giving to others.
- Enjoy family volunteer activities together.
- Help your young person become involved in a regular, planned volunteer experience.
- Encourage your young person to volunteer, and even to take a leadership role in and/or initiate service projects in an area that interests her or him. For example, an adolescent who likes younger children could help develop after-school activities for younger children.
- Encourage your child's school to incorporate giving/volunteering into the curriculum.
- Talk with your child about why your family cares.
- Encourage your youth to become active in personal giving.
- Be a role model of giving and sharing.
- Encourage your children to come up with their own ideas about how to help others. Help them make their ideas a reality!

*Make giving the rule, rather than the exception!*