

AGES
12-15

NURTURING A LIFETIME
OF VOLUNTEERING:

A TOOLKIT FOR FAMILIES VOLUNTEERING TOGETHER

REPAIR
THE WORLD

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Section 1

NURTURING A LIFETIME OF VOLUNTEERING

INTRODUCTION

One value that was sewn into the stitching of our character at a very early age had to do with our responsibility to help others... We were expected to be of assistance to our neighbors... "Being neighborly"... was synonymous with being kind, friendly, and helpful to our neighbors and something that we were encouraged to do on a regular basis through firsthand experience. It was a bit like mandatory community service.

— BeNeca Ward, author of *3rd Generation Country, A Practical Guide To Raising Children With Great Values*

As parents, we dream that our children will be blessed with health, happiness and prosperity. We also hope that they will appreciate these blessings and actively seek to share them with others less fortunate. How can we teach our children from a young age to use their talents, privilege and curiosity to help others? How can we encourage them to move beyond caring solely for their immediate circle of family and friends, and also to care deeply about their extended community as well as people around the world whom they may never meet? How can we teach them humility and patience, as we encourage them to envision and work toward a world in which there is more equity and justice as a result of their efforts?

The Torah's seminal and oft-repeated charge to "remember that you were slaves in Egypt" offers important instruction about how we can teach our children these values, beliefs and behaviors. Our ancient history of oppression, followed ultimately by redemption, compels us to leverage our power and privilege and work with empathy and in partnership with vulnerable populations. We must dedicate our voices, our hands and our resources toward loosening the economic, social and political fetters that enslave others. This is not only our responsibility but also our obligation.

At multiple times during the yearly Torah cycle, as well as around Passover tables each year, we publicly read aloud the injunction to remember that we were slaves in Egypt. As parents, we hope that our children will hear and absorb the deeper meaning behind this message. But we also know that while speaking about fighting injustice is important, it's not enough. As Rabbi Shimon taught in the 3rd century, "it is not what one says, but rather what one does, that makes all the difference in the world."¹ Our efforts must thus go beyond just talking the talk; we ourselves must model what it looks like to strive for change by getting our hands dirty, volunteering alongside our children and reflecting with them about the joys, challenges and struggles that are inherent when working toward change.

¹ Pirkei Avot, 1:17

INTRODUCTION

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit is designed to be used by families who wish to convey the importance of volunteering through the lens of Jewish tradition, ritual and text. Using this toolkit does not require a strong background in Judaism—nor even for both partners in a family to be Jewish—as much as an appreciation of Jewish teachings as a rich source of wisdom about communal responsibility. Rooted in this context, this toolkit asserts that when parents participate in hands-on service with their children, in essence, “practic[ing] the volunteer commitments that they preach,” parental teaching becomes optimally effective.² As noted by Chertok and Gerstein et al. in *Volunteering + Values: A Repair the World Report on Jewish Young Adults*, a regular commitment to unpaid service by young adults “appears to be a socially learned behavior influenced by parental modeling”; Jewish young adults, for example, who recall their parents volunteering frequently during their high school years are themselves more likely to volunteer regularly.³ Thus, actively engaging in service as a family when children are young can create “a habit likely to continue throughout the lifespan.”⁴

Chertok and Gerstein also found that for interfaith families, volunteering often serves as “an easily agreed upon and non-religious avenue for imparting compassion and a sense of moral responsibility to their children.”⁵ Volunteering can also bring disparate families together to connect around a shared sense of purpose and value.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SERVICE

This toolkit advocates for families to participate in specific type of service opportunities: those that are already established, direct and ongoing.

- *Already established*, meaning that the volunteer opportunity is driven by the host organization (rather than being designed and driven by families).
- *Direct*, meaning that families work face-to-face with others.
- *Ongoing*, meaning opportunities beyond episodic or one-time volunteering. While one-time volunteer opportunities may certainly prime the pump for a lifelong commitment to service, it is only through sustained and regular volunteering that children truly internalize the value of service as critical to their development as conscientious and engaged citizens.

When we participate in already established, direct and ongoing volunteer service, we may find our comfort levels challenged and our schedules disarranged. Yet these discomforts and inconveniences are precisely what help move us—some may even say *transform* us—precisely because they force us into uncomfortable and uncharted places from which we ultimately grow. This reminds us of another important lesson from Jewish history: the Rabbis taught that the Israelites *needed* to wander in the desert for 40 years after being released from slavery before entering the Promised Land so that they could be discomfited and thus truly transformed by the experience. Otherwise, they might have taken their redemption for granted and not have fully appreciated the end result. Similarly, when we face discomfort as volunteers, we are jostled into a deeper awareness of and appreciation for our own selves as well as others. Thus, as parents who wish to raise aware and engaged world citizens, we must model for our children a deep commitment to volunteering despite any initial discomfort or scheduling difficulties.

² Pancer S., & Pratt M. (1999). Social and family determinants of community service involvement in Canadian youth. In *Roots of Civic Identity: International Perspectives on Community Service and Activism in Youth*, ed. M. Yates, J. Youniss, pp. 32-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³ Chertok, F., Gerstein, J., Tobias, J., Rosin, S., & Boxer, M. (2011). *Volunteering + Values: A Repair the World Report on Jewish Young Adults*. New York: Repair the World. p.20.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.3

⁵ *ibid.*, p.20

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS IN THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit is designed for parents who embrace the idea of volunteering as transformative but need support in creating a meaningful experience for their family. It consists of two complementary sections. The first, based on Repair the World's "Service that Matters" guidelines, will help families articulate why volunteering is important to them. It will also guide families in selecting an appropriate already established, direct and ongoing volunteer opportunity.

The second section of the toolkit consists of activities (mostly under 15 minutes in length and requiring few materials, if any) that will help families reflect on their service together. Reflection is a critical part of the volunteer experience—as critical, perhaps, as the hands-on component itself—because it allows parents and children to process together any questions, concerns or inspirations that may arise. Research shows that such processing contributes to volunteers' long-term commitment to service by validating their feelings and helping them connect lessons derived from service to their personal behavior and beliefs.⁶ Children especially need time to process these connections and benefit greatly from hearing their parents' ideas and thoughts about the same experience. Many of the reflection activities in the toolkit use Jewish values or texts as a starting point for discussion, which serve to further connect families to traditional Jewish ideas and practices.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT MOST EFFECTIVELY

In order to address different developmental needs, this toolkit exists in three versions, each tailored to one of the following age cohorts: 5-7 year olds, 8-11 year olds and 12-15 year olds. Families with children representing more than one cohort should review the corresponding toolkits to select the activities that make the most sense for their family.

Parents can then set a rough timeline for when to complete each session. It may be helpful to schedule these sessions at the same time each week, such as before Shabbat dinner on Friday night or on the first Sunday evening of each month.

Recognizing that a family's commitment to social justice is one commitment among many, the sessions are highly adaptable to families' interests, needs and time considerations. Each session indicates an approximate time allotment and sometimes includes options or extension activities. Most of the activities can be adapted to be done at mealtimes, in the car, at bedtime, or whenever families have time together to talk and think more deeply about the important volunteer service that they are doing together. While there are many opportunities within the toolkit to document family conversations, some families may wish to also share their insights and experiences using social media.

What is "Volunteering" and "Service" Anyway?

In this toolkit the terms "volunteering" and "service" are often used interchangeably or in tandem to refer to the ways in which we use our talents, resources and time to help others in a humble and respectful way. Volunteering or service can take a variety of forms. It can include doing unpaid work, raising funds or holding a drive. It can take place at home or at an established organization. Above all, it entails putting others before ourselves and thinking about how we can pursue greater justice in this world.

⁶ Butler University Volunteer Center. Homepage. 17 July 2012. <<http://www.butler.edu/volunteer/resources/reflection-resources/#Why%20is%20reflection%20important>>.

INTRODUCTION

Though most of the activities are designed for families to do together, on occasion, advance work by parents is required. This generally occurs when an adult must confirm logistics with an organization, which is a conversation most easily had between two adults on the phone or over e-mail (rather than with the entire family present).

Families may wish to expand and enrich their experience by inviting another family or two to join them on this journey. Partnering with other families similarly committed to working toward social justice will not only help share the planning load, but will also give children additional adult role models as well as peers with whom they can grow in service.

As Pirkei Avot memorably pronounced: "You are not required to finish the task, but neither are you free to ignore it."⁷ Your family—in partnership with others in your local community and beyond—is taking an important step on the long road toward justice. *B'hatzlacha*—we wish you great success! May your hands be strong, your heart full, your mind clear and your service impactful.

⁷ Pirkei Avot, 2:21.

Unit 1

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO OUR FAMILY, TO JUDAISM AND TO ME?

To fully appreciate their role as volunteers, families must first explore and articulate what motivates them to volunteer. This section of the toolkit offers three lenses through which to examine these motivations:

- The first section allows parents and children to explore their family's relationship to and experience with volunteering, as well as those of their relatives and close friends.
- The second section uses the wider lens of the Jewish family to help families explore what Judaism teaches about helping others through volunteer work.
- Finally, in the third section, each family member examines his or her personal motivations for volunteering.

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 20 MINUTES)

OUR FAMILY'S VOLUNTEERING VALUES

Before beginning the process of selecting a volunteer opportunity, take time to discuss why volunteering is important to your family.

STEP 1:

Explain to your child that you will soon be volunteering together as a family. Before you decide where to volunteer, however, you first want to talk about what volunteering is and why it is important to your family.

STEP 2:

Ask your child:

- What does it mean to volunteer? (to willingly do something without receiving money for it)
- Where have you volunteered before (helping at a school fundraiser, serving as a "reading buddy" or making cards for elderly neighbors)? How did it feel to help someone else?
- Where have you learned about the importance of volunteering?
- Why do you think it is important for families to volunteer together? What do you think we could give and gain by volunteering together, as a family?

STEP 3:

Have your child interview you using the questions below. Either write down the responses in the spaces below or video the interview for posterity. Also encourage your child to use these questions to interview other relatives or close family friends about their volunteer experiences.

- What is your first memory of volunteering?

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- Did your parents or family friends volunteer when you were growing up? If so, where did they volunteer and what motivated them to volunteer there?

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- Have you ever benefited from the service of a volunteer? If so, what was that experience like for you?

.....

.....

UNIT 1: WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO OUR FAMILY, TO JUDAISM AND TO ME?

STEP 5:

Family Values Crest (15 minutes)

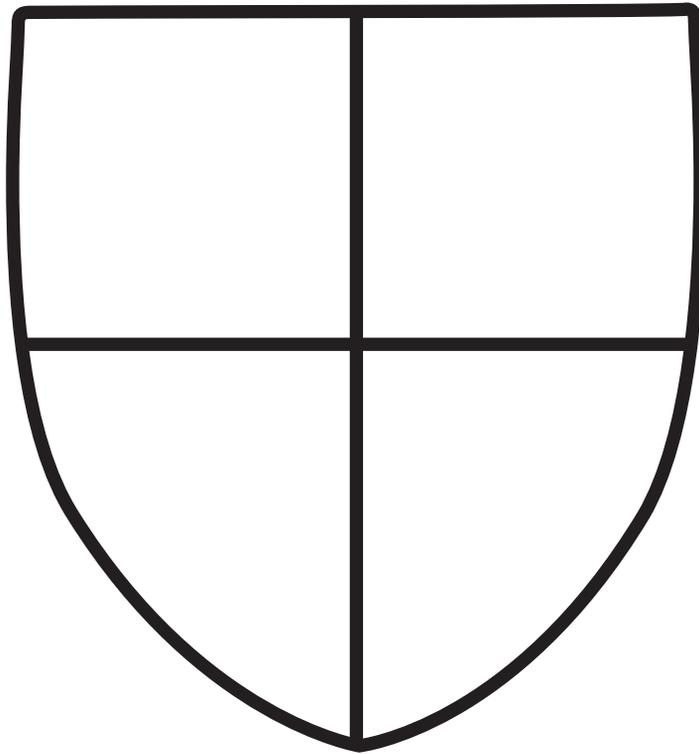
Artistically represent your family's volunteer values by illustrating a Family Values Crest.

Option: Family Volunteering Tree (20 minutes, plus prep time to gather photos)

Materials: *Photos, adhesive, markers, poster board*

Families can learn much about why they care about service, by tracing their family and friends' volunteer experiences. Gather photos of your relatives and admired friends. Paste them family-tree style on a piece of poster board, indicating below each photo the name of the person and the types of volunteer work in which he or she has participated. Note any patterns in these people's volunteering styles or interests. To shorten the activity's length, create a family tree with just names and no photos.

FAMILY VALUES CREST



ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

JUDAISM'S VOLUNTEERING VALUES

Judaism has much to say about the importance of taking care of others. By exploring traditional and contemporary Jewish ideas that relate to this value, you can anchor volunteering in an even bigger family tree: that of the Jewish people.

STEP 1:

Explain that Judaism's ancient texts and modern thinkers both deeply value communal responsibility—the need for us to take care of other people.

STEP 2:

Read the following text from the 5th century as a family:

But if a person sits in his or her home and says: "What have the affairs of society to do with me?... Why should I trouble myself with the people's voices of protest? Let me live in peace!"—if one does this, the person overthrows the world.

—Midrash Tanhuma, Mishpatim 2

STEP 3:

Discuss:

- This text states that there two types of people in the world. Identify them, their attitudes toward other people and the ultimate results of their actions.

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Studying Jewish Texts:

If your family has never studied Jewish texts before, have no fear! In the context of this toolkit, Jewish texts are offered as springboards for conversation. You need not be a Torah scholar to find meaning in them and offer your own valid and valuable response to the ideas that they raise. Try this three-step approach to reading Jewish texts in this toolkit:

1. Read the text to yourself and/or aloud with a partner. On the first reading, consider the text's surface meaning. What do the words mean? Can you repeat them in your own words? Note that although the language of the texts in this toolkit has been simplified for children's comprehension, you may nonetheless wish to define further or paraphrase sections of the text for your child.
2. Reexamine the text a second time, this time exploring what you think it is trying to teach or convey. What values does it uphold? What unspoken assumptions might it be making? Where might you agree or disagree?
3. Use the discussion questions following each text to stimulate thought and dialogue among members of your family. Remember that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers; Judaism deeply esteems conversation and debate over answers.

Note: While the texts included in this toolkit are primarily Jewish in origin, if your family is informed by other religious traditions, feel free to include other meaningful texts that will help further connect your family to service.

UNIT 1: WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO OUR FAMILY, TO JUDAISM AND TO ME?

- Why do you think the text says that someone who participates in public affairs "gives the land stability" but someone who ignores other people's problems "overthrows the world"?

- When have you sat back and ignored other people when you might have instead stood up to make a difference? Why is it sometimes easier to sit back and not be bothered with other people's problems?

STEP 4:

Read together the following passage by contemporary thinker Rabbi Yitz Greenberg:

Personal service must be brought to the fore as a central value of Jewish tradition and culture... it should become known as the indispensable expression of Jewishness.... This is not to say that Gentiles do not practice this value. Personal service [volunteering]... is widely recognized and valued in America.

However, service must be upheld as a norm expected of Jews. We must teach and work so that personal service is a field pioneered and spearheaded by Jews...

A Jew is commanded not just to do individual acts of *chesed* (kindness) to others but to set aside regular time for volunteering and giving personal service.

What is the minimum number of hours a week, a month, or a year that one must dedicate to nurturing the equality and uniqueness of other human beings? We must create a Jewish culture in which the final measurement of "was this life worthwhile" will be: Did one set aside regular times for nurturing other human beings?⁸

STEP 5:

Discuss:

- Why does Rabbi Greenberg believe that it is important for Jews to do personal service (volunteering) as part of their Jewish identity? Do you agree?
- How do Jewish values or tradition influence your own understanding of the importance of volunteering?
- What do you think the "minimum number of hours a week, a month, or a year that one must dedicate to nurturing the equality and uniqueness of other human beings" should be? How could we make that minimum an expectation of Jewish people?
- Rabbi Greenberg asks: "Do you set aside regular times for nurturing other human beings?" What would your answer be to that question today? As you think about volunteering as a family, how would you like to be able to respond to this question in the future?

⁸ Greenberg, Yitz. "Personal Service—A Central Jewish Norm for Our Time." CONTACT. 4.1 (2001): 3-4. Print.

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

MY VOLUNTEERING VALUES

After exploring the values that inspire your family and friends to volunteer as well as Judaism's perspective on service, consider your own volunteering values. We each volunteer for different reasons. Why do *you* volunteer?

STEP 1:

Review the following list of reasons why people volunteer. If family members are motivated by additional reasons, add them to the list.

Why Volunteer?

- To make the world a better place
- To give back to my community
- To learn more about social justice issues
- To practice my leadership skills
- Because it feels good
- To connect with other people
- Because my tradition teaches that I should
- Because it is something that my family and friends do, so I do too
- To put my Jewish values into action
- For recognition (such as on a résumé)
- Because it is my civic duty
- Because if I don't do it, who will?
- Because it's fun
- To have an excuse to do something that I love
- Because I was asked
- To challenge myself
- To learn new things
- Because the issue I volunteer on has personally affected me
- Because it is required (by school, for example)
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

STEP 2:

Read the list again. Ask each family member to silently select the three statements that best describe what motivates him or her to volunteer. Then take turns sharing the three statements that best resonate and discuss similarities and differences between your respective responses.

Unit 2

IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Congratulations! After discussing the values that your family, Jewish tradition and you yourself hold with regard to volunteering, your family can now begin to explore suitable volunteer opportunities in your community.

Although it might seem easier as a parent to decide on your own where your family will volunteer, by involving your child in the decision-making process, you will expose him or her to the myriad of social issues that exist as well as the difficult reality that we cannot help everyone who needs it. These lessons, although frustrating at times, are important to discuss with children even at a young age and will contribute to a more robust volunteer experience together.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #1**(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)**
+ADDITIONAL TIME FOR CHECK IN WITH THE ORGANIZATION**WHY NOT CREATE OUR OWN PROJECT?**

Families seeking to help may be inclined to develop their own project or fundraiser to benefit a cause. While this intention is honorable and understandable, this toolkit specifically encourages families to volunteer in an existing organization in order to expose them to the inner workings of a non-profit and allow them to use their time in a way that expressly benefits an organization. Additionally, this process helps teach children the important lesson that we must help others in the way that they wish to be helped, rather than in a way that is convenient or pleasing to us.

STEP 1:

Read together the following Jewish text from around the 5th century that encourages people to work in partnership in order to be most effective:

Separate reeds are weak and easily broken, but when they are bound together, they are strong and hard to tear apart.

–Tanchuma Nitzavim 1

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- Why are reeds bound together stronger than when they are apart?
- What does this passage teach us about the power of working with others?
- How does this image of reeds bound together explain why it is important that we volunteer with an organization rather than create our own project?

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 45-60 MINUTES)
CAN BE BROKEN INTO SMALLER SEGMENTS AND/OR THE RESEARCH
STAGE CAN BE GIVEN TO THE CHILDREN AS "HOMEWORK"

WHERE AND WHAT TYPE OF HELP IS NEEDED?

Finding an organization where your family can volunteer can be eye opening: in your research you are sure to find that there is much need in the world and many people working to effect change. This realization can also be overwhelming; if there is so much need and so many ways to help, where can your family fit in? The activities below will help bring these tensions to light so that you can discuss them as a family as you select the best volunteer opportunity for you.

Materials: *Large piece of paper, sticky notes (three per person), computer with Internet access*

STEP 1:

What Problems Exist in the World?

Pose the question: What types of problems exist in our community? Have each member of the family write down as many issues they can think of. The list may include: homelessness, poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, etc.

After about two minutes, have everyone take turns writing down one issue at time on a large piece of paper, taking care not to duplicate issues.

STEP 2:

Determine the Issues that are Most Meaningful to Your Family

Explain that while each of the issues that your family identified is important, with finite time and resources, your family is only able to address one at this time. To winnow down the list for the purpose of your volunteer service:

1. Have each person place a sticky note next to the three issues that are the most personally meaningful and explain why.
2. Family members may be persuaded by others' arguments to change where they placed their sticky notes.
3. Identify the issue that received the most sticky notes.

Children's Books with Social Themes:

Many parents find children's books helpful to contextualize social issues such as hunger, poverty and the environment. To find these books, both fiction and non-fiction, visit your local library or type "children's books [name of a social issue]" into a web browser. The Association of Jewish Libraries' Values Finder website (<http://www.jewishlibraries.org/main/Resources/AJLValuesfinder.aspx>) offers a searchable database of Jewish children's books related to values and social justice issues.

Why Focus on the Local and Not Global?

This toolkit encourages your family to volunteer on issues that have local impact, that is, that affect people in your community (i.e., your town, city or county). Although social issues of global concern are very important—and often have ramifications that are felt locally—by volunteering on an issue with local impact, your family is more likely to better understand an issue and feel more personally connected.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

STEP 3:

Research

Sit with your child and search the Internet to find two local organizations that work on the social issue that your family selected. You may also ask children to do this research on their own time and report back to the family later.

Remember that you are looking for organizations that offer volunteer opportunities that are *already established*, *direct* and *ongoing*. Offer the following definitions to your child as they do their research:

- *Already established*, meaning that the volunteer opportunity is driven by the host organization (rather than being designed and driven by families).
- *Direct*, meaning that families work face-to-face with others.
- *Ongoing*, meaning opportunities beyond episodic or one-time volunteering.

Examples of good volunteer opportunities for families with children between 12-15 years of age include:

- Preparing and serving meals at a local soup kitchen
- Unpacking and organizing food donations at the local food pantry
- Reading to or tutoring younger children in a before-school or after-school program
- Participating in local environmental restoration efforts
- Running errands and doing light domestic duties for homebound elders

STEP 4:

Be an Organizational Detective

Write down the following information about each organization you research:

- Organization's name
- Website address
- Contact's name, email address and phone number
- Organization's address

Searching Online for Family Volunteer Opportunities

The following sites may offer already established, ongoing and direct volunteer service opportunities in your community. You may also try an Internet search by entering "family volunteer opportunities [name of your city]" into your search engine.

Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies:
www.ajfca.org

Doing Good Together:
www.doinggoodtogether.org

Idealist.org:
www.idealist.org

Serve.gov:
www.serve.gov

United Way:
www.unitedway.org

The Volunteer Family:
www.thevolunteerfamily.org

Volunteer Match:
www.volunteermatch.org

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

- Mission statement [An organization's mission statement describes what it hopes to accomplish, such as "rescuing food in order to feed hungry people in our community" or "helping new immigrants achieve financial independence." Often, you can find an organization's mission statement stated in one or two sentences on its homepage. It can also be found on the "about us" webpage.]
- What activities does the organization do in support of its mission statement?
- What *already established, ongoing and direct* volunteer opportunities are available for families with children my age (and siblings, if applicable)?
- Is there a set time and date for volunteering? (for example, a tutoring program may only have availability for volunteers after school during the school year)

Parent Note: The organizations you research may not have volunteer opportunities for your family. If this is the case, there are two options:

1) You can call the organizations to see if there are any opportunities not presently listed on the website; or 2) you may seek out another local organization working on a different issue that has an appropriate opportunity. In the latter case, be sure to discuss with your child the importance of volunteering where you are expressly needed.

STEP 5:

Review the Organizations

Review the information that you found and collected about each organization.

Discuss:

- Which organization resonates with us most?
- How could our volunteering as a family help support this organization's mission?

STEP 6:

Select an Organization

As a family, select the organization whose volunteer opportunity resonates best. Be sure to have a backup organization in mind in case the first organization cannot accommodate you after all.

Giving Time vs. Giving Money

Most non-profit organizations indicate on their websites that one way to get involved is by making a financial donation. Giving money is certainly a powerful way to create social change in the world, and your family might consider also giving money—alongside giving of your time—to support a cause you care about. To help guide this conversation, see p.X in "Reflecting on Your Volunteer Service."

A Sticky Predicament:

As we decide where to volunteer as a family, we also must recognize that our volunteering alone will not solve the problem. If this is so, then why is it still important that we volunteer?

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

STEP 7:

Parent Homework: Contact and Confirm with the Organization

Contact the organization that your family identified to see if they would indeed benefit from your family volunteering with them. Respectfully state your offer to volunteer and be prepared to adjust your proposal in order to best fit their needs.

In your conversation, be sure to touch on the following logistics:

- Phone and e-mail address of your main contact at the organization
.....
- Your family's responsibilities as volunteers
.....
- When you will volunteer (day of week and time of day) and how often
.....
- The timeframe of your commitment (including start and end date, if applicable)
.....
- When and where you will receive an orientation
.....
- How you will get to the site where you will volunteer (if applicable)
.....
- Whether you need to bring any supplies, dress in a certain way, etc.
.....
- Other relevant information to relay to your family
.....

At the end of the call, be sure to thank the organization again.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Use the following topics to further enrich your conversation:

- Organizations can tackle the same social issue in a variety of ways. For example, an anti-homelessness organization might participate in *political advocacy* by lobbying politicians for legislative change, *fundraise* to build more low-income housing, and/or *offer direct services* such as providing counseling to homeless people. How does each organization you researched address the issue that it works on? Note that some organizations use multiple tactics to address an issue. Do you value one kind of approach over another? If so, why?

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

- When considering where to volunteer time or donate money, many people examine the operating budget of a non-profit organization, that is, how the organization uses its money. You can use Charity Navigator (www.charitynavigator.org) or GuideStar (www.guidestar.org) to review the financial data (how much is spent on programs, administrative/overhead costs, etc.) of most non-profit organizations. This data can shed light on how an organization operates and may inform whether you wish to become involved with it.
- While for the purpose of this activity, only local organizations will be researched, discuss the impact (as applicable) of the issue that you are researching *globally*. For example, if you are researching local anti-hunger efforts, discuss how hunger may be experienced similarly or different globally: what its causes might be and what organizations are doing to tackle it. In this context, take additional time to discuss why your family is presently focusing on a local manifestation of the problem rather than working globally. Where might you have greater impact? Why?

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

LOGISTICS, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Although you have already confirmed most details with the organization, by reviewing some of the logistics with your child, you create space for lingering questions that may be on his or her mind about the experience. During this conversation it is also important to talk about how you will gauge your success and how you plan to address any challenges you may encounter.

STEP 1:

Share with your child the details about the conversation you had with the organization where you will volunteer.

Discuss:

- Our responsibilities as volunteers
.....
- Where (at what physical location) will we volunteer
.....
- When will we volunteer (day of week and time of day) and how often
.....
- The timeframe of our commitment (start and end date, if applicable)
.....
- The need our volunteering will address
.....
- Any details regarding an orientation, if required
.....
- If we need to bring any supplies
.....

STEP 2:

Discuss possible challenges you may encounter. These may run the gamut from not getting along with all of the people you volunteer with; being bored with the volunteer service; or being unable to fulfill your original commitment. If any of these or other challenges arise, how do you hope and plan to address them as a family?

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STEP 3:

Explain that while thinking about challenges in advance is important, it is also important to think about what success might look like. Discuss as a family what this success will look like:

- From the perspective of the organization

- From the perspective of those whom the organization serves

- From our perspective as volunteers

Note that in the second section of this toolkit, "Reflecting on Your Volunteer Service," you will have the opportunity to return to these measures of success and see if you have achieved them.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #4

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

OUR HOPES AND DREAMS

As with any new beginning, starting as a new volunteer brings with it many hopes and some anxieties. It is important to take time to discuss these hopes, dreams and concerns as a family.

Materials: *Three strips of paper per person, three containers (i.e., small bowls or baskets), pens*

STEP 1:

Give each person three strips of paper and a pen.

Have each member of the family privately write down a response to the following three questions, each on a separate strip of paper:

1. What do you hope to learn through volunteering?
2. What are you looking forward to as a volunteer?
3. What, if anything, are you worried about regarding volunteering?

STEP 2:

After responding to each question, fold each paper in half. Have family members put their folded answers to the first question in the first container, their answers to the second question in the second container, and their answers to the third question in the third container.

STEP 3:

Shake up the containers. Have each person select one strip of paper from the first container and read it aloud. Discuss any common themes. Repeat for the strips of paper in the second and third containers.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #5

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

MAKING A COMMITMENT

In Judaism, one marks a wholehearted commitment to and expectations of another through a *brit*, or holy contract. By writing a family brit that states your family's commitment to the organization that you will be working with, you model for your children the importance of taking your commitments seriously, especially—and even—when one is volunteering without expectation of pay or external reward.

Materials: Paper, markers

STEP 1:

Write a family brit using the template below or write one from scratch together, reflecting on the following elements:

- Why are we committing to this volunteer opportunity? Why is it important to us? What does it mean to us?
- What do we hope to learn from volunteering?
- What would we like to accomplish through our service? How do we hope that it will benefit us? The community?
- In the case that our service does not work out as planned, we will...

OUR *BRIT*—THE COMMITMENT WE MAKE

Our family believes that it is important to volunteer because:

We therefore commit ourselves to:

By volunteering, we hope that:

We are excited to work together and with our organizational partner to make the world a better place.

Signed,

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

STEP 2:

Share the *brit* with a relative, teacher or rabbi in order to help hold your family accountable. Place it in a prominent place in your home. You may even choose to frame it.

Mazal tov! You are now ready to begin your volunteer service! Turn to page XX to find “Reflecting on Your Volunteer Service as a Family” for activities that will help enrich and deepen your family’s experience before, during and after your volunteer service.

Section 2

REFLECTING ON YOUR VOLUNTEER SERVICE AS A FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.

—James Levin

When we take time to reflect upon an experience—to consider how it felt, what it meant and how it may have challenged us—we not only better understand the experience but also discover important lessons to apply to our lives in the future. Reflection thus allows us to nurture our sense of wonder, test our assumptions, open our minds to new ideas and clarify our values.

Judaism also encourages continual reflection as a way to raise our awareness and participate more fully in the world. We read the same Torah stories year after year in order to mine our shared historical narrative for new meaning and relevance. On the High Holidays, we reflect as individuals and as a community on our actions over the past year to consider how we can do better in the year to come. *Mussar*, a Jewish ethical, educational and cultural movement that developed in 19th century and has seen resurgence in the 21st century, encourages us to notice how we practice certain virtues (such as listening or equanimity) in order to become more ethical, balanced and self-aware individuals.

REFLECTING AS A FAMILY

In our busy world today, making time to pause and reflect can prove to be admittedly challenging. However, as parents who hope to raise children who not only know themselves but also appreciate the amazing world in which they live, we must cultivate in ourselves and in them the habit of regular reflection. As parents, we can model this habit by both reflecting in front of our children as well as alongside them.

Modeling reflection is particularly important when volunteering with children. While the experience of volunteering is itself powerful, in order to concretize the experience, unravel any assumptions or anxieties, and encourage children to appreciate the enduring power of service in their lives, we must reflect with them. We must share our observations, discuss our feelings about our volunteer work, talk about what it meant to us—or how it fell short of our expectations—and discuss its impact upon us. By doing so, we teach not only the importance of reflection writ large, but also discrete skills—such as critical thinking, the ability to observe objectively and thoughtful analysis—which are powerful tools that children can apply to many other areas of their lives.

THE ARC OF THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

To assist your family in reflection, this toolkit presents activities in six subsections designed to correlate and respond to the anticipated arc of your family's volunteering experience: before, during and at its conclusion.

- The first section, "Beginning with the End in Mind," offers ways to document the volunteer experience from the outset until its end.
- The second section, "Volunteering as Sacred Time," provides ideas to ground volunteering in Jewish tradition and ritual.

INTRODUCTION

- “Nurturing the Qualities of a Good Volunteer,” the third section, can be used before volunteering. Activities in this section will help families practice important skills including honoring others, listening to others, and being a good guest at the host organization.
- In the fourth section, “Integrating the Volunteer Experience as a Family,” families will consider how to process and share their experiences as volunteers with empathy, dignity and humility.
- The fifth section addresses the challenging but not insurmountable issue of “When Things Don’t Go the Way We Expect.” These activities are designed to respond to common challenges for volunteers, such as when something uncomfortable occurs in the volunteer setting.
- In the sixth section, “Continuing Our Impact,” families consider ways to leverage their resources to further the cause of the organization with which they have volunteered.
- “Celebrating and Expressing Appreciation: Concluding the Volunteer Experience,” the final section, helps families close their volunteer experience in a meaningful way.

The activities, which vary in structure, are generally under 20 minutes. They can be done at home, while walking to school, in the car, at mealtimes, or before bed. They may be used in the order presented or in any order that best speaks to your family’s experience.

Finally, while these reflections help support families before, during and at the close of formal volunteering, families are encouraged to continue to reflect upon the experience and its impact long after completing volunteering at any particular site. In fact, you may find it helpful to return to some of the activities long after completing your volunteering, in order to address an important related question raised by a member of your family.

CREATING SPACE FOR REFLECTION

This section offers many activities and texts to spur conversation and reflection. Key to the activities’ success, however, is the existence of a safe, respectful and open atmosphere in which all members of the family feel comfortable offering their thoughts and feelings. In order to create such space for reflection:

- 1) Indicate that your time together as a family, thinking about and discussing the volunteer experience is, “safe space” in which no one will be judged.
- 2) Approach conversations from a stance of “appreciative inquiry,” in which judgment is not pronounced but rather questions are asked to further understand another’s point of view. Statements starting with “What do you mean when you say...?,” “Can you say more about...?” and “I wonder...” reflect a stance of appreciative inquiry.
- 3) Ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute to the discussion, not just the members of your family who find that reflection and sharing come easily.
- 4) Remember that for some members of your family, reflection through art, acting or writing might come more easily than through conversation or discussion. If so, create space for such forms of reflection.
- 5) Acknowledge and embrace quiet moments during sharing. It is often during quiet times in the company of others that we do our best thinking.

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REFLECTION IN THREE STEPS

Though the activities provided are designed to provoke thoughtful response and conversation, you can reflect with your family about any issue at any time using these three lenses:

- 1) **Wide Angle:** Consider the *big picture* of your experience. For example, if you are working at a soup kitchen, you might reflect on the issue of hunger and why there are hungry people even though there is more than enough food for everyone on the planet.
- 2) **Microscope:** Think about the *details* of your experience. If you are working at a soup kitchen, you might reflect on how the organization you are working with tackles hunger and how you can support their efforts.
- 3) **Mirror:** Think about *your own actions, beliefs and feelings*. If you are working at a soup kitchen, reflect on how you might feel if you were hungry and needed help, or think about how you may yourself contribute to the problem or solution of hunger in your community.¹

¹Ways to Reflect. PDF. 20 July 2012. <<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/parents/charactered/Documents/WaystoReflect.pdf>>.

Unit 1

BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

Judaism pays close attention to the passage of time. We mark the ending and beginning of the week with Shabbat and Havdallah; the start of each new month on Rosh Hodesh with special prayers; and the beginning of the new year at Rosh Hashanah with reflection and celebration. Similarly, your family may wish to consciously mark your time as volunteers in special ways. Not only will this help you look forward, but it will also allow you to return at the end of your service to a record of where you were at the beginning.

UNIT 1: BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

ACTIVITY #1

A VOLUNTEER CALENDAR

To mark your volunteer time as a family, use an academic calendar or a printed Jewish calendar, which many synagogues distribute without charge in the fall. You can also go to www.hebcal.com for a downloadable Jewish calendar.

Mark your volunteer calendar with volunteering milestones:

- The date of your first family conversation about volunteering
- The date you confirmed your volunteer site
- The date of your volunteer orientation
- The date of your first family reflection
- Your first day volunteering
- Other important dates to your family

Younger children might decorate the calendar, while older children might be assigned the task of keeping track of important upcoming events.

At the end of your volunteering, return to this physical record to note your progress and growth.

UNIT 1: BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

ACTIVITY #2

CREATING A VISUAL KEEPSAKE

Some families may find it meaningful to mark the volunteer experience through photographs.

As a family, discuss how you might use photographs to document your volunteering. At its conclusion, you may wish to create a photographic memory book using an online site.

The Power—Positive and Negative—of Photography:

While photography is a powerful mode of expression, if used inappropriately, it can cause harm. Keep in mind the following considerations when taking photos as a volunteer:

- Only take photographs with the express permission of the organization and any people whom you may photograph.
- Do not use the photographs for any reason other than for personal use.
- Do not post photographs of other people online or publicly without their permission.
- Be wary of hiding behind the camera; it can serve as a barrier to developing an authentic personal relationship with the people with whom you volunteer.
- Be careful not to over-photograph a scene.
- Be discrete when photographing.
- When photographing yourself or your child, consider how to frame the scene such that you or your child are not portrayed as the “hero” of the shot but rather as an equal participant. For example, if your family is bringing meals to an elderly person, consider taking a photo of your child holding hands with the elder rather than serving him or her a meal.
- Do not bring your camera into any situation where it would radically shift dynamics and call greater attention to extant inequities (for example, by bringing an expensive camera into a homeless shelter).

Unit 2

VOLUNTEERING AS SACRED TIME

By grounding volunteer service in Jewish tradition and ritual, it becomes connected to sacred Jewish values and becomes holy work.

UNIT 2: VOLUNTEERING AS SACRED TIME

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 2 MINUTES)

OFFERING GRATITUDE FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

In Jewish tradition, new beginnings are marked by the recitation of the *shehecheyanu*, through which we offer gratitude for having reached the occasion of starting something new.

Recite the *shehecheyanu* as a family before beginning volunteering for the first time to frame your new experience Jewishly and celebrate it together.

HEBREW TEXT

Transliteration:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higyanu lazman hazeh.

Translation:

Blessed are You, Sovereign of the Universe, for giving us life, sustaining us and allowing us to reach this day.

UNIT 2: VOLUNTEERING AS SACRED TIME

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

CREATING A FAMILY KAVANA (INTENTION)

The word *kavana*, or intention, comes from the Hebrew root meaning "to aim." Before prayer, many Jews offer a *kavana* (plural: *kavanot*) in order to aim their hearts in a prayerful direction and more deeply connect to the moment.

As a family, write a *kavana* to recite together each time before volunteering. The *kavana* can take the form of a blessing or a mantra.

When crafting your *kavana* together, consider:

- What are we "aiming for" as volunteers?

- Where do we wish to direct our hearts as we volunteer?

- What are our hopes and aspirations as volunteers?

Write down your family *kavana* and recite it together each time before volunteering.

If preferred, you may also use one of the following *kavanot*:

- Divine One, open our hearts and strengthen our hands as we volunteer today.
- Keep an open mind, an open heart and open hands.
- Be curious, be present, be kind.

Unit 3

NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

The activities in this section highlight important qualities and skills for families—parents and children alike—to consider and practice before volunteering. These qualities include:

- Honoring Others
- Listening to Others
- Greeting All with a Beautiful Face
- Being a Good Guest

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

HONORING OTHERS: *MECHABEYD ZEH ET ZEH*

Judaism teaches that the value of *mechabeyd zeh et zeh*—honoring others—is fundamental to powerful human connection. In a volunteer setting, honoring others is integral to a positive experience for both those serving and those being served.

Materials: Paper, markers

STEP 1:

Read the following text below, written by contemporary Episcopalian priest Barbara Brown Taylor. In the piece, Brown Taylor reflects on the meaning of the biblical instruction to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). She asserts that loving another as yourself is something we can practice in every encounter we have with another person.

As you read the passage below, consider how you can serve as a volunteer who consciously engages in the practice of honoring every one you meet.

At its most basic level, the everyday practice of being with other people is the practice of loving the neighbor as the self. More intricately, it is the practice of coming face-to-face with another human being, preferably someone different enough to qualify as a capital “O” Other—and at least entertaining the possibility that this is one of the faces of God.

... This spiritual practice requires no special setting, no personal trainer, no expensive equipment. It can be done anywhere, by anyone who resolves to do it. A good way to warm up is to focus on one of the human beings who usually sneak right past you because he or she is performing some mundane service such as taking your order or handing you your change. The next time you go to the grocery store, try engaging the cashier. You do not have to invite her home for lunch or anything, but take a look at her face while she is trying to find “arugula” on her laminated list of produce.

Here is someone who exists even when she is not ringing up your groceries, as hard as that may be for you to imagine. She is someone's daughter, maybe someone's mother as well. She has a home she returns to when she hangs up her apron here, a kitchen that smells of last night's supper, a bed where she occasionally lies awake at night wrestling with her own demons and angels. Do not go to far with this or you risk turning her into her a character in your own novel, which is a large part of her problem already. It is enough for you to acknowledge her when she hands you your change.

“You saved eleven dollars and six cents by shopping at Winn Dixie today,” she says, looking right at you. All that is required of you is to look back. Just meet her eyes for a moment when you say, “Thanks.” Sometimes

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

that is all another person needs to know that she has been seen—not the cashier but the person—but even if she does not seem to notice, the encounter has occurred. You noticed, and because you did, neither of you will ever be quite the same again.²

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- Why is it important to be “seen”? How does it affect your sense of value and worth when you are seen and noticed rather than ignored or looked past?
- Do you believe, as Taylor writes, that because “you noticed” another person, “neither of you will ever be quite the same again”? If so, how? As a volunteer, how can we notice the people with whom we volunteer?

STEP 3:

As a family, consider how you can do the warm up that Taylor suggests: “Focus... on one of the human beings who usually sneak right past you because he or she is performing some mundane task such as taking your order or handing you your change.” Commit to trying this exercise as a family. Check in after a few days to see how it feels to connect with other human beings whom you might have otherwise ignored or failed to notice.

² Taylor, Barbara Brown. *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith*. New York: Harper One, 2009. pp.94-95.

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 8 MINUTES)

LISTENING TO OTHERS BY BEING QUIET: *SH'TIKAH*

Sh'tikah, being quiet—both by closing one's mouth as well as focusing one's mind—is an important skill to practice when serving as a volunteer.

STEP 1:

As a family, read the following text from Pirkei Avot, a collection of rabbinic teachings from the third century CE:

The one who listens to counsel (advice) is wise.

—Pirkei Avot, 12:15

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- How does one become wise from listening to counsel?
- Give an example of when you listened to counsel and gained wisdom (not just knowledge).
- As volunteers, how can listening bring us wisdom and insight? At the place where we volunteer, who specifically might offer counsel or advice that we can listen to and learn from?

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

GREETING ALL WITH A BEAUTIFUL FACE:
SAYVER PANIM YAFOT

A person's facial and body language can convey volumes before words are ever exchanged. As a volunteer, nonverbal language—especially when first entering an organization, can relay important messages to the people who you encounter.

STEP 1:

Read together the following vignette about a rabbi from the 19th century, which offers important lessons about how to behave when first entering an organization as a volunteer.

Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel thought the most important thing was loving-kindness. To him, loving-kindness meant “being careful of another’s honor and dignity, helping others, having one’s heart overflow with kindness, and utilizing every opportunity to benefit others.... Above all, it meant that one should greet his fellow with a pleasant countenance [face], because it makes the other feel good and binds people together in friendship.”³

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- Do you agree with Rabbi Finkel that the most important thing is loving-kindness? Why or why not?
- What are other examples of loving-kindness that you would add to Rabbi Finkel's list?
- Rabbi Finkel's list ends with the statement: "above all, it meant that one should greet his fellow with a pleasant countenance [face]." What does this mean? What can a simple smile convey to another person?
- How can we as volunteers demonstrate loving-kindness to the people with whom we volunteer?

³ Morinis, p.212

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #4

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

BEING A GOOD GUEST

Volunteers must remember that despite any sacrifices they might be making in order to volunteer, the host organization often also sacrifices staff time and organizational resources to support volunteers. Therefore, as guests—albeit ones intending to help—volunteers must prioritize the needs of the organization and seek to be good guests when they serve. The following activity will help families discuss how to be good guests as volunteers.

STEP 1:

Read together the following story about a rabbi who lived in the 19th century to better understand what it means to be a good guest in someone else's home. The lessons can also be applied to volunteer settings.

When visiting the home of a wealthy student, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (1810-1883) [ritually] washed his hands before eating using a minimal amount of water. His student asked why he did this, because usually a person washed with a lot of water. Rabbi Yisrael answered that although that is generally true, in this instance, he noticed that the elderly woman working in the house was responsible for carrying in the water from a far away well. While using more water would usually be preferable, in this case it would mean making the woman do more work [and a result he did not want to use a great deal of water].⁴

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- What does Rabbi Yisrael notice in his student's home that causes him to change his behavior?
- How does Rabbi Yisrael understand his relationship to the elderly woman working in the house?
- Rabbi Yisrael does not want to impose a greater burden on the elderly woman. As volunteers, how can we strive to not make more work for the organization, its staff or resources?

⁴ Adapted from: Morinis, Alan. *Every Day, Holy Day: 365 Days of Teachings & Practices from the Jewish Tradition of Mussar*. Massachusetts: Trumpeter Books, 2010. p.30.

Unit 4

INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

The activities in this section will help families process and share what they observe and encounter during their volunteer experience.

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

OUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS

After your first volunteering session, take time to process what you saw and experienced.

STEP 1:

Discuss with your child his or her first impressions of volunteering. Ask of your child and share yourself:

- What is one thing that surprised you?
- What is one thing you learned?
- What questions did our volunteer raise for you?

STEP 2:

Have your child write a poem in a format of their preference (rhyming, acrostic, haiku) that incorporates their first impressions of their volunteer experience.

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

CULTIVATING EMPATHY

Empathy—seeing the world from another’s perspective with compassion and understanding—is critical for healthy human relationships. By practicing empathy, volunteers—especially those who work with people from dissimilar backgrounds—can find meaningful connection.

STEP 1:

Read as a family the following adage from Rabbi Hillel, who lived and taught in the 1st century BCE:

Do not judge [think you know what someone else is feeling or thinking] your friend until you are in his place.
–Pirkei Avot, 2:4

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- In your own words, what is Rabbi Hillel saying?
- Can you really be in someone else’s place? Can you really know what it feels like to be someone else?
- How can remembering what Rabbi Hillel taught us help us as we volunteer?

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #3

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

We live in a world of stories. We read them in religious and secular contexts, impart them to our children and tell them daily to our friends, partners, colleagues and ourselves. Professor Bruce Jackson, writing in *The Antioch Review*, explains that stories are powerful mechanisms of communication because:

Ordinary life is disorderly, cluttered, and full of things that don't seem to make a great deal of sense. It's in our stories that things make sense. Stories are how we know things and how we remember them... We organize the events of our lives in terms of these narratives. These stories are not just file cabinets or movies of ordinary life; they are also the devices with which we explain and justify ourselves to ourselves and to others.⁵

Rabbi Will Berkovitz, writing from a religious as well as anthropological perspective, asserts that the very act of listening to and telling stories is holy. As he writes:

Many of the holiest moments in life are not found in churches or synagogues or in the cloistered study of sacred literature. No, the sacred moments that sustain and bind us together are the sharing of our common humanity through simple encounter – the telling and hearing of our stories, the passing along of our experiences.

Moreover, asserting that “everyone has a story to tell and deserves to tell it,” Berkovitz continues:

The telling and hearing our stories is a rare instance of a gift given and received in two directions – at once an act of solidarity and reciprocity. It knits together the fabric of our separate lives into a common tapestry. We are taught at an early age not to talk to strangers, but often we keep people as strangers when we could be building relationships.⁶

Sharing stories is certainly important and has the potential to be holy, community-building work. Yet much depends on how we tell stories about others and retell others' stories. Since we tend to tell stories from our own perspective, when we tell stories that feature other people or stories in which other people are protagonists, we run the risk of unintentionally misrepresenting them. As volunteers who may be working with less privileged populations, this dynamic can be particularly tenuous and problematic. For example, many volunteers inadvertently portray themselves as self-sacrificing heroes and the individuals with whom they volunteer as dependent or weak. In other cases, not fully understanding the culture of the other person in the story can cause volunteers to inadvertently pass judgment on others' actions.

⁵ Jackson, Bruce. "The Stories People Tell." *Antioch Review* 55.3 (1997): 605-320. Academic Search Premier. Roosevelt U. Lib., Chicago. 8 Feb. 2007 <http://search.ebscohost.com/> p.305.

⁶ Huffington Post. The Priest and the Prostitute: Storytelling as a Gift to God. 29 July 2012. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-will-berkovitz/storytelling-gift-to-god_b_1166538.html>.

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

Take for example, the following blog post by a college student who volunteered in Africa for eight months:

Let's start at the beginning. As I was sitting on the plane from Addis Ababa to Douala... my first interaction with a Cameroonian ended in a proposal... a wedding proposal that is. And since then? I guess I've had about a handful of chances to marry some random Cameroonian men, but am sorry to report that this girl is not yet engaged. And it seems that whenever I talk to men in Cameroon I get the chance to share that I feel I am too young to think of marriage, kids, and yes I already know that if we had babies together they would be a beautiful mixed caramel color... Sometimes it can be hard when my roommate and I walk to the supermarket and get yelled at in every direction, but I also have found that personally these people aren't here to make us upset or scared, they just think it's pretty weird that two young and pale white girls are walking to a supermarket in the middle of Douala, a place without much tourism and the only diversity coming from neighboring countries or the few old American or European men that are here on business. As Mama Simone would tell me, they are just yelling at you because they think you're beautiful! Although, I have to say I don't think after sweating in the hot and humid weather all day after taking care of a bunch of kids who wipe their noses all over me and maybe having running water that day to take a shower—actually deserves any recognition whatsoever, but I guess I'll take the compliment...⁷

Though undoubtedly written with the best intentions in mind, this blogger reveals some negative and naïve impressions about Cameroon and the people with whom she volunteered for eight months.

Her blog post demonstrates that when we tell stories about other people, we quickly create images and ideas about those people in others' minds—images and ideas that can be helpful or harmful. We are therefore obligated to consider thoughtfully how we tell stories that represent the people with whom we volunteer with dignity, honor and sensitivity.

This toolkit certainly does not seek to discourage volunteers from telling stories about their experiences to others; in fact, story-telling, in addition to creating connection between human beings, is a critically important way of motivating others to join and do good work themselves. Rather, when telling stories, families must consider how they speak about others with dignity and respect—in other words, in the way they themselves would want to be treated and spoken about.

⁷ Words Across the Universe. 29 July 2012. <<http://wordscrosstheuniverse.blogspot.com/>>.

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #4

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

TREATING OTHERS WITH *KAVOD*, HONOR AND DIGNITY

As volunteers, we must always remember to treat and speak about others with kavod, honor and dignity.

STEP 1:

Read together this 3rd century text about honoring others.

Do not underrate the importance of anything, for there is no one that does not have his/her hour, and there is no thing that does not have its place.

—Pirkei Avot 4:3

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- In our volunteer setting, what might we find ourselves unintentionally "underrat[ing] the importance" of? (the people we are volunteering with, their stories and history, the history of the organization, the staff)
- When the text states: "there is no one that does not have his/her hour," what does it imply about our own relative fortune and position of power? (it could change quickly tomorrow)
- What does this passage teach us about how we should treat and speak about others?

If you volunteer with people who have made choices that you do not condone (for example, past drug abuse), it may be challenging for you to relate to them without judgment. Although you may not respect someone's decision, Judaism teaches us to still show each individual *kavod*, honor and dignity. As parents, it is important to talk about your own struggles around this tension with your child, to both model self-reflection as well as teach that the answers to some challenges are not always clear even to adults.

ACTIVITY #5

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

SHARING THE STORY OF OUR VOLUNTEERING WITH OTHERS

By considering what it feels like when people tell stories about us, we can better sensitize ourselves to how we speak about others.

STEP 1:

Reflect on the following statement by Martin Buber, a 20th century philosopher:

Speak as if God were listening to everything you say.

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- What does Buber's statement suggest about what we should be thinking about whenever we speak? Specifically, how might his advice impact the way we speak about other people?
- How can we relate Buber's teaching to ourselves as volunteers?

STEP 3:

The following activity highlights the importance of being careful in the way we speak about others.

1. Partner with another person. One person is the designated speaker and the other the listener.
2. The speaker has two minutes to relate a story about something that recently happened to him/her that is relatively personal but is something he/she feels comfortable sharing with the whole family.
3. The listener must listen to the speaker without asking questions or responding.
4. After two minutes, the listener repeats the speaker's story back to the speaker. The speaker cannot respond or correct any aspect of the listener's retelling. *Option:* The listener relates the speaker's story to the *entire family* and the family can ask questions or make comments but, again, the speaker cannot respond.

Another Perspective:

There are many children's books that retell classic fairy tale stories from the perspective of a supporting character. Read one to your child (for example, *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka) and reflect together on how the story feels different when told from a different character's perspective. Is the story any less "true" when told from another character's perspective? How do you think differently about the story when you hear it from another point of view?

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

STEP 4:

After completing the exercise, discuss:

- As the speaker: How did it feel to have your story told but be unable to correct details or respond?
- As the listener: What was it like to tell the speaker's story knowing that he or she couldn't respond?
- All: What responsibility do we have when telling stories about other people, especially with those whom we volunteer?

Optional: We often change the way we tell a story in order to relate better to our audience. To practice this skill and test its impact, have each family member select a meaningful story about his/her volunteer experience. Tell the story three times according to the following three contexts. After the activity, reflect on how and why the same story changed for each setting.

- At a fundraiser for the cause or organization where you are volunteering
- At a job interview
- On an airplane speaking with a stranger about your experience

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #6

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

BEING AWARE OF OUR PRIVILEGE

A person of “privilege” has an advantage over others, often because of his or her skin color, financial resources or gender. For example, people with white skin may—knowingly or not, willingly or not—experience racial privilege, which means that they are treated better because of the color of their skin. Similarly, middle- or upper-class families experience privilege because they have the financial resources to purchase things that allow for a higher quality of life (such as being able to buy a car rather than having to take the public bus; live in certain neighborhoods; and attend certain schools (such as higher performing public schools or private schools) that are not equally accessible to everyone.

The following activity does not seek to make families feel guilty about their privilege, but rather to become aware of it and to think about how their privilege might affect their relationship with those they serve.

STEP 1:

Ask: What does privilege mean? [Note that your child may be most accustomed to hearing the word “privilege” used in relation to the “privilege” of watching TV or having a cell phone rather than as a social construct.]

Define privilege by explaining that it describes a situation in which “one person has an advantage over another person, often because of his or her skin color, financial resources or gender.”

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- What privileges does our family have (financial, racial, socio-economic, etc.)?
- What advantages do we have as a result of our privilege? (we can live wherever we wish, attend good schools, buy things we want when we want them)
- At the organization where we volunteer, how might others perceive our privilege? (For example, if your family is working with people living in poverty, what might they think if you come in with flashy cell phones and flashy clothes?)
- Do you think we have to disguise our privilege in order to be effective volunteers? Why or why not? Is it even possible to disguise our privilege?
- How can we use our privilege to help the people with whom we volunteer? [Think outside of just giving time—are there other resources we may have access to as a result of our privilege (such as politicians’ time or the ability to donate money) that can be leveraged in order to make a difference in other people’s lives?]

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

STEP 3:

Read the following text by Martin Buber, a contemporary Jewish philosopher:

We cannot avoid using power ... so let us ... love powerfully.

STEP 4:

Discuss:

- In your own words, what does Buber think about power?
- How can we use our privilege, and the power that it brings with it, to "love powerfully"?

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #7

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

BEING A HUMBLE VOLUNTEER

When we volunteer, it is easy to feel good about ourselves—to pat ourselves on the back and feel self-satisfied. However, Jewish tradition reminds us to treasure humility in our interactions with other people, remaining aware that there is always something to learn from others and always room for us to grow.

STEP 1:

Discuss as a family the following questions:

- One definition of humility is “occupying your rightful space, where ‘space’ can be physical, verbal, emotional, financial, and so on.”⁸ How can we occupy our “rightful space” as a volunteer?
- Another definition of humility is being “grounded, centered ... [a person who understands] the interconnectedness of all beings.”⁹ What do you think about this definition? How can we be grounded and centered as volunteers?
- What other definition of humility/being humble can we offer based on our experiences?

STEP 2:

Read together the following Jewish text from the 10th century:

Ever be humble ... in learning and good works, humble with your parents, teacher and spouse, with your children and household, with your kinsfolk near and far, even with the one on the street, so that you become beloved on high and desired on earth.

—Tanna de Be Eliyahu¹⁰

STEP 3:

Discuss:

- This text suggests that we should be humble at all times. Do you think that it is easier to be humble at certain times than at others? If so, when?
- Do you find it easier to be humble while volunteering, or when you are at school or work? Explain.
- How do you demonstrate humility as a volunteer? Give an example.

⁸ Morinis, p.57.

⁹ Lindahl, Kay. *The Sacred Art of Listening*. Woodstock, Vermont: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2004. p.48.

¹⁰ Adapted from: Freeman, Susan. *Teaching Jewish Virtues*. Denver, Colorado: ARE Publishing, 1999.

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY**STEP 4:**

Being humble does not mean that we must ignore or deny our skills or strengths. Rather, it means that we must recognize that we will always have room to grow. Ask: Which of your strengths do you feel are particularly useful as a volunteer? Where do you think you need to grow? Write down these areas of strength and growth and talk about how you can continue to work on them, supporting each other as a family.

Unit 5

WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE EXPECT

Despite our best hopes and intentions, as volunteers, there will be times when things don't go the way we expect. In order to strengthen the experience—both for ourselves as well as for the organization we serve—we must reflect on the challenges we face in order to understand, if not ameliorate them.

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

WHEN SOMETHING IN OUR VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT MAKES US UNCOMFORTABLE OR NERVOUS

As volunteers, we sometimes encounter situations that may make us uncomfortable or nervous. For example, volunteers who work with people with mental illness or physical disabilities may experience situations that they are not accustomed to. While feeling uncomfortable or afraid is okay and normal, it is important as a volunteer not to become paralyzed in these circumstances.

Children may indicate that there is something or someone that makes them uncomfortable or nervous when they volunteer. You yourself may have some uncomfortable feelings that arise in you when you volunteer. Sharing these feelings as a family is very important. The activities in this section offer some framework for discussing these feelings and for bolstering one's courage in new and sometimes unsettling situations.

STEP 1:

Read together the following passage, written in the 9th century, that suggests that changing your perspective can help you summon courage in times of fear.

A man saw an insect that looked like a firefly, and it terrified him. He was asked, "Is this what terrifies you? At night it is a fiery, blazing thing, but when morning comes, you can see it is nothing more than a worm."

—Pesikta Rabbati 33:4

Discomfort vs Danger:

Emphasize to your child that feeling discomfort is not the same as feeling unsafe or in danger. At any point when volunteering, if your child feels physically or emotionally unsafe, tell her to speak to you or another adult immediately and cease volunteering there. Also be sure to communicate and explain these concerns to the organization.

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- What is the man afraid of at night? What does he realize it is when it becomes daylight?
- Is there anything that you have been afraid of or nervous about, only to come to see it in a new light and not be afraid anymore? What was the thing that you feared and how did you come to see it differently?
- In your volunteer experience, is there anything that frightens you or makes you uncomfortable? What can you do to see it in a new light and therefore not be as uncomfortable with it anymore? (talk to someone about it, do Internet research about it)

UNIT 5: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE EXPECT

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

UPHOLDING OUR COMMITMENT

Before beginning your service, your family expressed its hopes and dreams. But what happens if your volunteer experience doesn't turn out the way you hoped or expected? How can you continue to be positive, give the benefit of the doubt as applicable and/or make adjustments to your volunteering in order to make it a meaningful and positive experience for all?

Materials: *Copy of your family's volunteering brit* (Page XX)

STEP 1:

Discuss as a family how sometimes when we do something over and over, we begin to tire of it. We may feel this way sometimes about going to school, practicing an instrument, or playing a sport. However, if we keep going, even if we are tired, in the end we often feel good and are very proud.

As volunteers, we can sometimes feel the same way. When we get tired, we need to remember why we wanted to volunteer in the first place.

STEP 2:

Refer back to your family *brit* to remember your original motivations as volunteers. Discuss:

- As volunteers, why is it important that we do what we say we are going to do?
- How does it feel when someone makes a promise to finish something but then doesn't finish it?
- What can we as a family do to continue to enjoy our time volunteering together?

Tweaking the Volunteer Experience: If your child becomes resistant to volunteering, consider:

- Changing the time of day of the volunteering
- Incentivizing the service by having the child take photos or record it
- Engaging the child in a different role

Remember, however, that any changes that will affect the organization must be made *in ongoing communication* with the organization so as to minimize the stress on their staff to make accommodations. However, do not guilt or force your child if he/she does not want to participate. While commitment is important, developing a lifelong love of and appreciation for service is also important, and that cannot be done through guilt or compulsion.

UNIT 5: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE EXPECT

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)
+ ADDITIONAL TIME FOR A CHECK IN WITH THE ORGANIZATION

A MIDPOINT CHECK-IN

As you approach the middle of your time volunteering, it is important to check-in both as a family as well as with the organization where you serve.

STEP 1:

Have each family member check in, offering one example of where things have been going well.

STEP 2:

Have each family member offer one example of where things might be improved. For each example, explore:

- Why do you think things aren't going as expected?
- Does the organization expect different things than we do? What can we do to improve the situation?
- How can expectations be adjusted in order to continue to serve this organization well?

STEP 3:

Either have a family representative, or the entire family, have a conversation with a representative from your host organization to make sure that your needs and theirs are still matching up well. Be prepared to listen and share, as well as make adjustments as needed in coordination with the organization.

STEP 4:

Taking the organization's feedback into account, strategize as a family about how to adjust your volunteering in order to be the most helpful and effective partner you can be.

Unit 6

CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

Beyond volunteering time, how can we leverage our resources in order to make the greatest impact?

UNIT 6: CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 30-60 MINUTES)

EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF THE PROBLEM

Many volunteer opportunities available to families—such as serving meals in a soup kitchen or staffing a homeless shelter—address the symptoms of a larger, more entrenched set of problems. For example, a homeless shelter attends to the *immediate needs* of the homeless by offering a safe and clean place to stay, but the shelter itself does not address the foundational causes of homelessness. These *foundational causes* may include a lack of affordable housing, high rates of joblessness, effects of mental illness, and discrimination. Thus, to truly effect change on any social issue, its foundational causes must be explored and strategically addressed.

Conversations about systemic issues can be complicated, as a myriad of intertwined factors—political, social, economic, and historic—lie behind every social issue. However, families who explore these issues are bound to find the conversations rich, rewarding and revelatory.

STEP 1:

Ask: What do you see when you admire a tree? (its trunk, branches and fruit) What parts of the tree exist below the ground—the parts of the tree that we usually do not see? (roots, underground water sources)

STEP 2:

Explain that social problems are like trees: we may see the “branches, leaves and trunk” of a problem but there are always “roots” beneath the surface that are not always obvious. We call the parts of a problem that we can see “immediate needs” and the roots of the problem “foundational causes.” Foundational causes can be political, social, economic, and historic.

STEP 3:

Explore the example of the immediate and foundational causes of homelessness below.

The parts we see/“immediate need” → People without homes

Below the surface/“foundational causes” →

- There aren't enough homes that people can afford
- People don't earn enough money to afford the housing that exists
- People who suffer from untreated mental illness may be unable to consistently pay their rent or mortgage
- Young adults living in abusive homes run away and find that they have nowhere to go

UNIT 6: CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

STEP 4:

Use the template below to explore the social issue that your volunteer service addresses. List the problem—the “immediate need”—on the trunk. On the roots, list all the factors or “foundational causes” that might be leading to the problem. Keep “digging” among the roots in the “soil” until you exhaust possible factors leading to the presenting problem.

Use the Internet to support your research by entering “causes of” and the name of the social issue into a search engine.



UNIT 6: CONTINUING OUR IMPACT**STEP 5:**

Review the foundational causes that you identified and discuss: How can these factors be addressed? For example, one foundational cause of homelessness is a lack of affordable housing. One way to address this underlying issue is to ask local politicians to support the building of more low-income housing. As another example, if people are not earning enough money to pay for housing, you can support legislation that promotes a living wage in your community.

UNIT 6: CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

ACTIVITY #2

TZEDAKAH—ANOTHER WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Volunteering one's time is an important way to make a difference in the world. Giving money—in Judaism, known as *tzedakah*—is another way in which we effect change in the world. Money allows non-profit organizations to turn on the lights, pay staff salaries and support volunteer programs.

Your family may therefore find it very meaningful to give *tzedakah* to the organization with which you have been volunteering. You may choose to give on a regular basis (such as through automatic monthly donations), on special occasions (such as on holidays or in honor of a birthday) or as a culminating donation of appreciation.

Before donating, discuss:

- When and how often do we want to donate funds to this organization?
- How much money do we wish to donate to this organization?
- Where else do we plan to donate *tzedakah* this year? Do we want to give more to this organization or social issue because we are familiar with it through our volunteering?
- How much of our donation should be from kids' money or from parents' money?
- Do we want our money to go to the organization's general fund or to a specific area that the organization works on (also known as "earmarking")?

For additional resources, activities and texts designed for children and families on the value and importance of giving *tzedakah*, including a giving plan that will help you identify your *tzedakah*-giving priorities, see *Where Do You Give? A Tzedakah Curriculum*, an initiative of American Jewish World Service, at <http://wheredoyougive.org/education-portal/>.

UNIT 6: CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)
+ TIME TO CARRY OUT COMMITMENTS MADE

SPREADING THE WORD

In addition to volunteer time and financial donations, non-profit organizations benefit from word of mouth, that is, people talking about the organization and its good work. Such endorsements can be more powerful than an organization's best direct marketing campaign, and can lead to additional passionate volunteers and financial donations.

Material: Paper, pens

STEP 1:

Explain that one of the most powerful things that your family can do to help the organization where you volunteer is to share your experiences with others. Remember that whenever you tell the story of your volunteer experience, you should do so with dignity and respect.

STEP 2:

Have one family member write down on a piece of paper one idea for spreading the word about the organization. Have that person pass the paper to the next person to write down a second, different idea. Go around until the family runs out of ideas.

STEP 3:

Commit, as a family, to do at least one thing on your list by a certain date. Be sure to hold each other accountable to this important task.

Suggested ways to promote the organization where you volunteer:

- Speak about your volunteer experience at work, school or synagogue
- Encourage a community service club (at school or work) to volunteer at the organization
- Write about your volunteer experience in a local newspaper
- Participate in fundraisers or campaigns run by the organization
- Use a social media site to highlight the work the organization does
- Commit to additional volunteering with the organization or a similar organization
- Advocate for issues that affect the organization with which you volunteer

Unit 7

CELEBRATING AND EXPRESSING APPRECIATION: CONCLUDING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

As your volunteering time comes to a close, it is important to recall the famous *Pirkei Avot* text that "it is not your responsibility to complete the work but neither can you ignore it."¹¹

¹¹ Pirkei Avot 2:21

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

ADVOCATING FOR OTHERS

For families with adolescents who are finding their voice as young adults, the impending close of the formal volunteering experience is a good time to discuss how to use their volunteer experiences and voices to serve as advocates for others.

STEP 1:

Read together the following Talmudic text from the 6th century, which exhorts us to be careful to listen to and learn from everyone, regardless of their status or power:

Happy is the generation whose great [leaders] listen to the small, for then it follows that in such a generation, the small will listen to the great.

—Rosh HaShanah 25b

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- In what way can a generation whose great leaders listen to the small be “happy”? What other words might describe such a generation?
- At the place where you volunteer, who is “great” and who is “small”? [Note that there may be more than one way of categorizing great/small.] How does one’s access to power, resources and education affect the category in which one may be placed?
- For young adults: How can you help “great” leaders- such as politicians and government officials, hear the voices of the “small-” such as people who may not typically have access to power or money? What tools do you have to help amplify the voice of the “small” or encourage the “great” to better hear the “small”? (for example, your time, your passion, your voice and/or other resources)
- For young adults: How do you imagine that your volunteer experience might impact how you live your life as an adult leader of the next (and hopefully happy) generation?

STEP 3:

In awareness and celebration of the power that we have to advocate for others, have each member of the family write a letter to the editor of a national, local or school newspaper about an aspect of the volunteer experience. Alternatively, the entire family may choose to co-author the letter together, reflecting the powerful experience of volunteering as a family.

UNIT 7: CELEBRATING AND EXPRESSING APPRECIATION: CONCLUDING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)
OR 45 MINUTES IF HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH A STAFF MEMBER

MEASURING SUCCESS

Before beginning your volunteer service, your family discussed how you would measure the success of your efforts. As your time volunteering comes to a close, it is important to revisit those measures.

STEP 1:

Review your family's original predictions for what success might look like, not only to your family but also from the perspective of the organization where you served. Do you think you were successful? Did your metrics for "success" change over time as you got to know the organization and your volunteer role better?

STEP 2:

If possible, arrange time to speak with staff member from the organization to get his/her perspective on your success and growing edges as volunteers.

ACTIVITY #3 (APPROXIMATE TIME: DEPENDS ON THE PROJECT SELECTED)

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

Completing your volunteering can be an emotional experience. There may be feelings of sadness as well as accomplishment and celebration. Above all, there may be a sense of gratitude. As a family, it is key to consider how to express your own appreciation.

STEP 1:

As a family, consider how to offer gratitude to the organization that has hosted you. Appreciation is important for everyone, especially for staff of non-profit organizations who are often underappreciated.

Ways to Say Thank You

- On your last day, personally thank and say goodbye to anyone who played a special role in your volunteer experience (i.e., staff or clients/guests of the host organization with whom you volunteered).
- Create or write hand-written thank-you notes to the people in the organization who helped you along the way—from your original contact person to special people with whom you volunteered.
- If you have been taking photographs throughout your time volunteering, use an online site to make a photo book to give to the organization.
- If you have recognized a need at the organization (for example, new chairs for the waiting room or a new coffee maker), consider purchasing and donating that needed item.
- Consider making a financial donation to the organization.

ACTIVITY #4

A CONCLUDING BLESSING

Upon concluding a book of the Torah, it is traditional to recite "*hazak hazak v'nithazek*"—"Be strong, be strong and let us strengthen one another!"

As a family, recite this phrase together as you conclude your service.

May you go from strength to strength in pursuit of a more just world in which all families of the earth work together toward *chesed* (loving-kindness), *tzedek* (justice) and *shalom* (peace).

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