

SOARScholars®

COMMUNITY SERVICE IDEA GUIDE

Being a part of SOAR Scholars® not only means getting help preparing for college, it also means giving back to the community in which you live. This document is only an idea guide. In it, you will find some ideas for projects to make your volunteer experience fun and rewarding. Choose a project or develop your own project and get started! No matter how big or small your volunteer activity, you truly are making a difference.

CATEGORIES

SENIOR CITIZENS

ANIMALS

WORKING WITH CHILDREN THE

ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH AND SAFETY

HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS SCHOOLS AND

EDUCATION YOUR COMMUNITY

OTHER RESOURCES

SOARVirginia®

Presented by Commonwealth Savers

Commonwealth Savers PlanSM and SOAR Virginia® do not recommend nor investigate any of these community organizations. It is the responsibility of the student and parents to deem the worthiness of the organization for community service purposes.



SENIOR CITIZENS

- Get with friends and form a Clean Up Club to help senior citizens with their house cleaning.
- Write letters to people in a nursing home.
- Offer to read to people in a nursing home.
- Do something creative on the holidays for the senior citizens (cook a meal, bake cookies, dress up in costumes, etc.)

- Get a group together to sing or present a play at a nursing home.
- Teach a senior citizen how to use a computer or the Internet.
- Help senior citizens in your neighborhood obtain and install locks or smoke alarms.
- Offer to pick up groceries with/ for a senior citizen.
- Go for a walk with a senior citizen in your community.
- Form a carwash squad to clean and wash senior citizens' cars.
- Form a Mall Patrol with your friends to help senior citizens with their shopping.

- Pick up the morning paper for a senior citizen neighbor on your way to school.
- During bad weather, visit senior citizens to make sure they have everything they need.
- Rake leaves, shovel snow, clean gutters or wash windows for a senior citizen.
- Deliver holiday meals to the senior citizen group or an individual senior citizen.
- Write letters for an elderly person and deliver them to the post office.
- Lead a bingo game for nursing home residents.
- Provide a voter pick up or transportation service for senior citizens.



ANIMALS

- Collect pet food for an animal shelter.
- Collect and sort newspapers to donate to a local animal shelter.
- Volunteer to clean out animal shelters.
- Find out about volunteer opportunities at a local animal shelter, wildlife sanctuary or survival center.
- Care for a neighbor's pet.
- Organize a community dog wash.

- Set up donation centers for animal products to be donated to animal shelters.
- With the support of a vet clinic, organize a neuter and spay campaign to get animals neutered and spayed at a reduced rate.
- Organize a pet show for a local nursing home.
- Walk dogs from the local animal shelter.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

- Organize a reading hour for children at your local elementary school or library.
- Make simple reading and math flash cards for a preschool or day care center.
- Write or make a picture book to read to a younger child.
- Assist an after-school little league or other sports program for younger children.
- Collect children's books for local libraries, day cares, doctors' offices, or elementary schools.
- Collect old clothes and donate them for a dress-up area at a daycare.
- Collect old stuffed animals and dolls and donate them to a daycare center or homeless shelter.



- Become pen pals to someone in another state or another country.
- Offer safety tips for children during Halloween.
- Volunteer to lead a youth club- Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, or church youth group.
- Volunteer as a counselor at local summer camp.



- Collect crazy and fun hats for kids receiving chemotherapy treatments and donate them to local hospitals.
- Hold a puppet show for hospitalized kids to help lift their spirits.
- Set up a book exchange so kids can trade books they've read for ones they haven't.
- Arrange to donate your old working computer to an after-school program.
- Volunteer at an agency or organization that works with children with disabilities (Arc of Virginia, Miracle League, River City Buddy Ball, and local Down syndrome or autism groups, Special Olympics).

THE ENVIRONMENT

- Adopt a park with your friends and keep it clean. Check with your local parks and recreations department for more information.
- Hold an invention contest at your school with entries made from recycled goods.
- Start a recycling center at school.
- Volunteer to separate recyclables
- Adopt a highway through the Department of Transportation and clean up litter.
- Get together with friends and make conservation posters for a community center.
- Collect aluminum cans and donate the money to a favorite charity.
- Create a campaign to encourage biking and walking.
- Collect old phone books in your neighborhood for recycling.
- Organize a carpooling campaign in your neighborhood to cut down on air pollution.
- Set up a recycling system for your home and participate in your neighborhood curbside recycling pick-up.
- Organize and promote a community-wide cleanup week.
- Build birdhouses and donate them to a nature center.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- Arrange for the local health department to conduct neighborhood health checks.
- Volunteer at a health fair.
- Conduct a community accessibility check to identify potential barriers for individuals in wheelchairs or with other disabilities.
- Organize a local blood drive with Virginia Blood Services or bone marrow donor registration drive with Be The Match.
- Work with the local health department to set up an immunization day or clinic to immunize children against childhood diseases.
- Create a poison awareness campaign.
- Build a ramp for a person in a wheelchair so it is easier for them to get in and out of their house.
- Work with your fire department to help others learn about fire safety.
- Produce an anti-crime, anti-drug, or anti-violence play for a local daycare or elementary school.
- Organize a self-defense workshop.
- Create a TV or radio public service announcement against drugs and alcohol.
- Join a community crime prevention organization.
- Organize a hunter safety program in your community.
- Volunteer at a police station.
- Create a holiday safety video.
- Organize a Safe Walk Service to escort young children to and from schools.
- Write a proposal for a sports safety clinic to your coach and school officials.
- Volunteer to serve as a crossing guard before and after school.
- Start a neighborhood watch program.
- Make emergency kits for your home.



HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS

- Collect grocery coupons or coupon inserts around your neighborhood to give a local food bank.
- Make a care package with mittens, socks, T-shirts, etc. for a child at a homeless shelter.
- Donate art supplies to kids in a homeless shelter.
- Make Care Kits with combs, toothbrushes, shampoo, etc. for homeless people.
- Gather clothing from your neighbors and donate it to a local shelter.
- Help cook and/or serve a meal at a homeless shelter.
- Prepare sack lunches and deliver them to homeless or homebound people.
- Collect items to deliver to homeless shelters (blankets, sheets, towels, toys, books, disposable diapers.)
- Make first aid kits for homeless shelters.
- Assist with sorting and organizing items donated to a homeless shelter.
- Clean out your closet and attic to find toys and clothes in good condition that you no longer wear to donate to a homeless shelter.
- Sponsor a food drive at your school or parent's workplace or business.
- Pack and hand out food at a food bank.
- If your community doesn't have a food bank, work with local officials to start one.
- Start a collection drive for old sports equipment and donate it to families or youth/sports groups who need it.
- Collect new/unused make-up, perfume and other cosmetics for a center for abused women.
- Collect old magazines and donate them to homeless shelters.
- Decorate a Christmas tree at a nursing home, hospital, school or homeless shelter.
- Contact a local tree farm about donating a Christmas tree to a nursing home, homeless shelter or family in need.
- Organize a coat drive in which old coats in good condition are donated to the homeless.
- Organize a mitten, hat and scarf drive.
- Collect donations and fill a laundry basket with household items for a homeless shelter relocation service.
- Organize a food drive for a domestic violence shelter.

SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

- Set up a buddy system for kids with special needs at your school.
- Conduct a canned goods drive during a school event and donate the items to a local food bank.
- Recognize teachers during National Education Week.
- Volunteer for student council and school government committees.
- Encourage the school cafeteria to donate leftover food to local homeless shelters.
- Hold a used book sale and donate the money a local charity.
- Volunteer to be a teacher's aide during your study hall.



- Form a study group to help younger kids with their schoolwork.
- Collect school supplies to give to kids who need them.
- Tutor students who are learning English as a second language.
- Organize a safe walk to school event.
- Conduct a seatbelt check at school as students leave the parking lot.
- Provide childcare during a PTA meeting.



YOUR COMMUNITY

- Get your class to put together a library at a children's hospital.
- Volunteer at a water stop for a local race or sporting event.
- Form a band with your friends and give free community concerts.
- Lend a helping hand at a local community center.
- Read aloud to a person who is visually impaired or can't read.
- Mow the lawns and care for the plants of neighbors who are away on vacation.
- Organize a campaign to raise money to buy and install new playground equipment for a park.
- Clean up after a natural disaster.
- Spruce up and paint the community or youth center.



- Collect supplies for persons **who have been in a fire or** natural disaster.
- Distribute leaf bags during the fall encouraging residents to clean leaves from their streets and yards.
- Volunteer to help with Vacation Bible School.
- Volunteer to clean up trash at a community event or county fair.
- Research local historic sites and provide the research to visitor's bureau.

- Volunteer at a local historic site.
- Produce a neighborhood newspaper.
- Organize a newcomer's group in your neighborhood to welcome new families.
- Make get well cards for people in hospitals and convalescent homes.
- Check on either a younger student or an elderly person after school.
- Ring the bell for Salvation Army during the holidays.
- Set up a web page for a nonprofit agency.
- Volunteer to do office work at a local nonprofit agency.
- Volunteer to be a museum guide.
- Take photos during an event and donate them to the event organizers.
- Work in a concession stand to raise money for a good cause.
- Donate books or personal items to teens at a local juvenile detention center.
- Teach someone to read.
- Volunteer to help at your county fair.
- Form a volunteer lawn mowing service with your friends.



OTHER RESOURCES

- Volunteer Match - www.volunteermatch.org
- DoSomething.org - www.dosomething.org
- America's Natural and Cultural Resources Volunteer Portal - www.volunteer.gov/gov
- Youth Service America- National Youth Service Day - www.ysa.org
- United Way - www.unitedway.org
- Habitat for Humanity - www.habitat.org
- Ronald McDonald House - www.rmhc.org
- Red Cross - www.redcross.org
- Special Olympics - www.specialolympics.org
- Big Brother/Big Sister Programs - www.bbbs.org
- Highway Clean-up/Adopt a Highway program - <http://www.virginiadot.org/programs>
- Toys-for-Tots drive - www.toysfortots.org
- Participating in activities for designated charities (M.S. Walk-a-Thon, March of Dimes, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cancer Society, etc.)