

# *Community Service*

*Why it's good not just for your community but for your kids!!*

Today there are millions of children throughout the United States giving their time and expertise to service learning projects and your child can be one of them. Here are some reasons your child should get involved.

By taking responsibility and taking action your child(ren) can become a driving force to truly make a difference in the world around them. When they see the difference they make, this will build their confidence and self-esteem and lead them to bigger and better things in their future. Volunteering is a hands-on way for children to learn the values of kindness, compassion, tolerance, community responsibility, and good citizenship. It also helps kids become less self-absorbed. We want to kids to realize that the world doesn't revolve around them. Community service is an excellent way to teach them this life lesson.

There are endless ways parents can get their children involved in efforts to help others. Collecting toys and clothing to give to Goodwill is routine for many families, and a great starting point to contributing. Research suggests, though, that parents should encourage their children to accompany them to Goodwill or the hospital and take part in distributing the items. It's important for children to be hands-on and to get a visual of how their contributions affect others

At Gymcats, we ask our students to volunteer once a month and help by assisting kids with autism at our monthly free gymnastics classes for kids with autism. This volunteering is not only appreciated by those parents who get to watch their kids in class just like every other parent gets to do, but it also is super beneficial for the kids who do the volunteering. Kids who are well off sometimes forget that other people are struggling. Doing community service is a way to give back to others while at the same time being grateful for the lives they have and what their parents have done for them.

Here are some instructions for starting community service with your child.

1. Don't wait to get started. Begin the conversation now.
2. Serve the community yourself. Talk about your interests and the needs of the community at dinner in a conversational way.
3. Decide what you want to do and do it. Talk about it and demonstrate how rewarding it is.
4. Talk to your child about what needs your child sees in the community. How would they make a difference if they could.
5. Encourage your child to get their friends involved. Studies show that there is more follow through when people work together.
6. Make it accessible. Does your child need a ride to recycling? Do they need help scheduling a presentation? Do they need a ride to the local hospital or soup kitchen? Help with the details, but please do not take over

Here are some great organizations to help you get started in giving back to your community.

- Kids Care Clubs.org
- Free the Children.com
- Key Club International.org
- Young Volunteers.com
- Compassionate Kids.com
- Do Something.org
- Points of Light.org
- Volunteer Match.org
- USA Freedom Corps.gov

