Mom It Forward

service

December 2012

31 FAMILY FRIENDLY HOLIDAY SERVICE IDEAS

SMALL AND SIMPLE WAYS TO SPREAD CHARITY AND CHEER THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

- Mahatma Gandhi

31 DAYS OF SERVICE

31 Small and Simple Ways to Spread Charity and Cheer This Holiday Season

Dec 1

Create a Service Calendar

Create a service advent calendar with your family. You can use the calendar provided (see page 22) or create your own using the service ideas in this eBook. If you want more ideas for your calendar, check out this **advent calendar post** from Tip Junkie.

Photo courtesy of Kami Bigler | NoBiggie.net

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.

- Rabindranath Tagore

Dec 2

JOY Your Neighborhood

Getting JOY-ed in December is similar to getting BOO-ed at Halloween. To start holiday JOY, secretly leave a small gift basket, the JOY poem, JOY instructions, and a JOY sign (see page 23 for the printable) at your neighbor's doorstep.

The lucky JOY-ee is asked to post the sign near the door, alerting others in the neighborhood that "We've been JOY-ed!" This prevents new JOY recruits from getting duplicate JOYs on their doorstep.

In turn, that neighbor is asked to JOY two other homes in the neighborhood, leading to a chain reaction of holiday fun. See who gets JOY-ed next in your neighborhood!

Dec 3

Leave Mailbox Goodies

Leave a little bag of holiday treats for your mail carrier and/or trash collector. Make sure to leave a note with the treats that expresses your thanks for the service he or she does for your family. Read about Hands Free Mama's heart-warming experience **here**.

Dec 4

Host a Food Drive

Instead of exchanging neighbor gifts, have everyone in your neighborhood give the gift of food. Organize several drop offs at various neighbors' homes and provide people with instructions of what to drop off and when. Be sure to send reminders throughout the month. Have your kids help sort the items, bag them, and deliver them.

Photo courtesy of Felicia Carter | GoGrahamGo.com

> *In the end, the number of prayers we say may contribute to our happiness, but the number of prayers we answer may be of even greater importance.*

- Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Dec 5

Celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas

As a family, choose another family in your area to be the recipient of 12 days of gift giving. Try to think of a family that may be struggling financially, emotionally, or with health problems and might need a boost during the holiday season.

How It Works:

Each day, starting December 13, leave a gift anonymously on the doorstep of your chosen family. Involve the kiddos in your secret acts of service. Your gifts can relate to the "12 Days of Christmas" song verses (i.e. partridge in a pear tree, turtle doves, French hens, etc.) but it's not necessary. Try to choose or provide handmade gifts that are tailored to the family. The gifts don't have to be big or expensive, they just need to be from the heart.

On the first night, leave a note with the gift explaining that they will be receiving gifts for the next 12 days. For example, "Congratulations! We're excited to celebrate the '12 Days of Christmas' with you. Check your doorstep each night until Christmas Eve for a gift to help you celebrate the holiday season."

Note: This can be tailored to other winter holidays if you or the family you are serving do not celebrate Christmas.

Dec 6

Give Groceries

When you go grocery shopping for your family, buy a few extra groceries. Have them bagged separately in paper and leave them on the doorstep of someone who you know could use them. Leave a note on the bag that says, "Happy Holidays!"

"No one has ever become poor by giving.

- Anne Frank

Photo courtesy of Tracey Black | DontMessWithMama.com

Dec 7

Celebrate Pearl Harbor Day

On Pearl Harbor Day, what better way to honor those who serve our country than by sending them a thank you card? Get your family together and write letters to service men and women in the country or overseas. In the letters, express how much you appreciate their service and wish them a happy holiday season.

Dec 8

Serve Food at a Shelter

Serve food at your local homeless shelter. Make sure to set your children's expectations before you go. They should know what you will be doing and who they will be meeting. Also, check with the facility prior to your arrival to set up a time and to ensure your children are age appropriate.

Dec 9

Host a Cookie Exchange

Instead of having a traditional cookie exchange where cookies are exchanged among participating families, focus on a night of giving. Get together with family and friends and have each person or family bring enough plates of cookies to take to needy families in your area.

Check out these **reindeer cookies** for a fun holiday cookie idea.

Dec 10

Spread the Puppy Love

Gather blankets, treats, toys, and food and drop them off at your local animal shelter. Animals need love during the holidays, too! **Click here** to find an animal shelter near your home.

Photo courtesy of Gilda Aliberti | Evan-and-Lauren-a.blogspot.com

"The more you become aware of and respond to the needs of others, the richer your own life becomes.

- Mollie Marti

Dec 11

Appreciate Culture

There are many religious and cultural holidays during December. Choose a holiday you don't normally celebrate in your family (e.g.. Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa) and learn about the traditions associated with the holiday. Add a delicious touch by trying some of the foods associated with the holiday.

Dec 12

Clear the Way

Surprise your neighbors by raking leaves or shoveling snow on their driveway or sidewalks. Or, you can take out and bring in their garbage cans for them.

Dec 13

Spread Candy Cane Cheer

As a family, attach a tag with a message of holiday cheer to candy canes and put them in bags. Take them with you as you run holiday errands and hand one out to each person who helps you (servers, cashiers, etc.). Your message could say something like, "Thank you for spreading holiday cheer!"

Read about how one family used candy canes to lift spirits during the holidays **here**.

Photo courtesy of Jill Greenlaw | MomItForward.com

Service which is rendered without joy helps neither the servant nor the served. But all other pleasures and possessions pale into nothingness before service which is rendered in a spirit of joy.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Dec 14

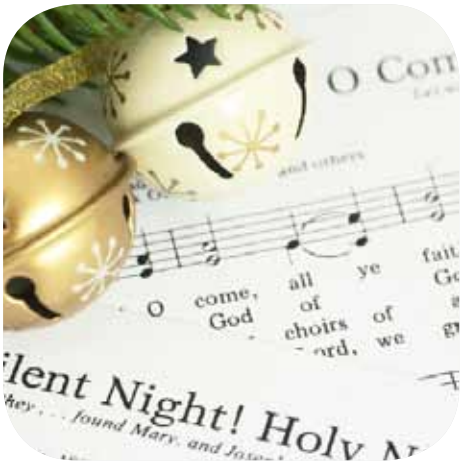
Share Your Talents

Do you or your kids have musical talents? Go to your local elderly assisted living center and share a holiday concert with the residents. Depending on your talents, you can sing carols, play songs on the piano, play a solo on a musical instrument, etc. Don't worry about being perfect. They will love hearing from you and your family.

Dec 15

Sub for Santa

Participate in a "Sub for Santa" either through a church, school, or community group for a family in need in your area. Have your family pick out the gift, wrap it, and deliver it to the family together.



Dec 16

Go Caroling

Spread some holiday cheer in your community by taking the whole family to sing holiday favorites on the front steps of your friends and family. Consider going to elderly people's homes to bring holiday cheer right to their house. Take plates of goodies or just smiles to leave with the families after you sing your hearts out to them.

Photo courtesy of Jenny Ingram | JennyOnTheSpot.com

When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed.

- Maya Angelou

Dec 17

Clean Your Closet

Go through your and your kids' closets to find clothes that no longer fit or that you haven't worn in the last year. Gather your clothing and donate them to your local homeless shelter.

Dec 18

Serve With Smiles

Smile and say hello to everyone you see today.

Dec 19

Provide Coloring Comfort

Go to the dollar store and get some coloring books and crayons. Put some drawing paper, coloring book pages, and crayons in manila envelopes. Deliver the envelopes to the local DHS office or police department for kids to use while there.

Dec 20

Share Compliments

Brighten someone's day by giving them a genuine compliment today. Make it a game with your kids and award a point for each compliment they give. Whoever has the most points at the end of the day will win a prize!

> *"Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.*
>
> *- Booker T. Washington*

Photo courtesy of Tara Rex | TaraDaraMadeIt.com

Dec 21 Host a Book Drive

Go through your "home library" with your family. Find books that your children have outgrown or that you probably won't read again and donate them to your local library, shelter, nursing home, or children's hospital. Remember to contact the location where you want to donate books and ensure they are accepting donations.

Dec 22 Practice Kindness and Patience

Make sure to be kind to people on the road, in the stores, at restaurants, and at the cash register. Keep in mind that it is the busiest shopping season of the year and everyone is doing their best. Throw out a smile or a compliment to someone who is struggling to keep holiday cheer.

Dec 23 Hand Out Cheerful Post-Its

With your family, come up with fun, cheerful holiday Post-It notes. Drive around town and leave your Post-Its in different locations for people to find. Put them on vending machines, on public bathroom mirrors, or on someone's windshield in the parking lot. You could even have a server at a restaurant deliver it to one of their tables, etc. Be creative and have fun!

Photo courtesy of Lucrecer Braxton | Art-Slam.com

> *One of the great ironies of life is this: He or she who serves almost always benefits more than he or she who is served.*
>
> *- Gordon B. Hinckley*

Dec 24

Give Neighbor Gifts

Get the family together and make your favorite holiday treats. Plate the treats and deliver them to all of your neighbors. Attach a note to each plate saying how much you appreciate them. If you need some neighbor gift ideas, check out these yummy recipes:

Chocolate Chip and Oatmeal Cookies in a Jar
Chocolate Neighbor Gifts
Salted Caramel Hot Chocolate Mix and Homemade Vanilla Marshmallows
Shortbread Sandwich Cookies
Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Truffles

Dec 25

Gift it Forward

Before your children open their gifts, encourage them to choose one of their gifts to give to a family or child in need in your area. Once they have opened and decided on the gift, wrap it back up and deliver it to your chosen recipient.

Dec 26

Get Online

Take it easy today and serve others from your computer. Get the family together and make someone's day by doing at least one of the following:

- Go on Facebook and leave kind comments on your friends' walls.
- Skype with a family member or friend you weren't able to see during the holidays.
- Write a blog post about each family member's favorite moments while serving this month.

Life is for service.

- Fred Rogers

Photo courtesy of Ciaran Blumenfeld | CiaranBlumenfeld.com

Dec 27

Donate a Toy

Go to the dollar store and buy several children's toys. Take the toys to children in the cancer ward of your local hospital.

Dec 28

Collect Coupons

Collect grocery coupons to give to a local food bank.

Dec 29

Participate in a Drive-Through Donation

When going through a tollbooth, drive-though, or grocery store checkout, help out the person behind you. Pay their tollbooth fare, buy them a cup of coffee/hot chocolate, leave a gift card, or contribute a certain amount of money toward their purchase.

Dec 30

Thank Public Servants

Take a plate of homemade goodies to your local fire station, police station, or other public servants. Make sure to leave a note with the treats expressing your thanks for the service they do for your family and community.

Dec 31

Make a January Service Calendar

As a family, make a new calendar with 31 acts of service to do as a family during the month of January. Start the year right with more charity and cheer!

> *"It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.*
>
> *- Mother Teresa*

Photo courtesy of Susan Krueger | SusansSpinningPlates.wordpress.com

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December

Holiday Service Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27	28	29	30	1 Create a Service Calendar
2 JOY Your Neighborhood	3 Leave Mailbox Goodies	4 Celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas	5 Host a Food Drive	6 Give Groceries	7 Celebrate Pearl Harbor Day	8 Serve Food at a Shelter
9 Host a Cookie Exchange	10 Spread the Puppy Love	11 Appreciate Culture	12 Clear the Way	13 Spread Candy Cane Cheer (Gift 1 of 12 Days of Christmas)	14 Share Your Talents (Gift 2 of 12 Days of Christmas)	15 Sub for Santa (Gift 3 of 12 Days of Christmas)
16 Go Caroling (Gift 4 of 12 Days of Christmas)	17 Clean Your Closet (Gift 5 of 12 Days of Christmas)	18 Serve With Smiles (Gift 6 of 12 Days of Christmas)	19 Provide Coloring Comfort (Gift 7 of 12 Days of Christmas)	20 Share Compliments (Gift 8 of 12 Days of Christmas)	21 Host a Book Drive (Gift 9 of 12 Days of Christmas)	22 Practice Kindness and Patience (Gift 10 of 12 Days of Christmas)
23 Hand Out Cheerful Post-Its (Gift 11 of 12 Days of Christmas)	24 Give Neighbor Gifts (Gift 12 of 12 Days of Christmas)	25 Gift it Forward	26 Get Online	27 Donate a Toy	28 Collect Coupons	29 Participate in a Drive-Through Donation
30 Thank Public Servants	31 January Service Calendar	1	2	3	4	5

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We've Been JOY-ed!

You Have Been JOY-ed!

Acts of kindness are on the sly.
In fact, this came from friends close by!
The treats you have with this short note
Are yours to keep. Enjoy them both!

JOY has been left on your front door.
Pass it on for delights galore.
Neighbors will have smiling faces.
Who can guess who's "JOY-ed" which places?

Give a gift but keep it quiet.
Treats welcome; forget the diet.
It's official, the season's here.
So spread the JOY and share the cheer!

Please keep JOY spreading by following these directions:

- Cut out and place the JOY sign on your front door or in a visible window.
- Make two copies of this note and the JOY sign.
- Make two treat bags or JOY baskets.
- Secretly deliver the gift, directions, and JOY sign to two neighbors who haven't been JOY-ed yet. Keep an eye on your neighbors' front doors to see how far the JOY is spreading.

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KEEP CALM

GIVE ON

LOVE
MAKE A DIFFERENCE
FAMILY
Holy Night
VOLUNTEER
HAPPINESS
COMMUNITY
CHARITY
Service
GIVING
PEACE
JOY
Cheer
HOLIDAYS

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ME | MOM | MY WORLD