

Doing Good Together

building strong families, caring kids and a better world



[Home](#)

[About us](#)

[Mission](#)

[Who We Are](#)

[Jenny Friedman](#)

[Board of Directors](#)

[Fact Sheet](#)

[Support us](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Get involved](#)

Ten Reasons ...

Ten Tips

Talk and Learn

FAQ

Busy Family's Guide

Family Stories

Newsletter

Workshops

Projects

Environment

Community Service

Social Action

Holidays

Volunteer Vacations

Charitable Giving

Random Acts of Kindness

DGT in Action

Where is DGT

Workshops

Volunteer for DGT

Partners

Resources

Books, links, and more

Busy Family's Guide

Articles

FAMILY STORIES

We'd love to hear your family's story. How did you engage your family in community service, social or political action, or charitable giving? What age children do you have? How did it work? (We want to hear your disasters as well as your successes!) E-mail us at mail@doinggoodtogether.org with your family's tale and we may publish it.

Family Stories Menu

1. **Our spotlight is on ...** the Hanka family ... *full story*

For families
For faith communities
For schools
For media
For donors

Sign up for our
newsletter

Email:

Go

2. Cornelia Elementary School ... [full story](#)
3. Anne Blake and her children's Box Project .. [full story](#)
4. The Church of St. Patrick ... [full story](#)
5. Juliann McDermott's UNICEF Halloween drive ... [full story](#)
6. Sarina Smith's cards ... [full story](#)
7. Becky Cook gathers school supplies ... [full story](#)
8. Kids doing drama for a cause ... [full story](#)
9. The Patton Family's adopted grandmother ... [full story](#)
10. Twenty-year-old Sarah Ingebritsen volunteer vacations ... [full story](#)
11. The Bascom family in the great outdoors ... [full story](#)
12. The Steefel/Moore Family making lunch ... [full story](#)
13. Breck School's (Minneapolis, MN) 4th grade volunteer mixer ... [full story](#)
14. Ben and David White's mountain of toys expedition ... [full story](#)
15. The Mathewsons cook twice a month at the Minneapolis Crisis Nursery... [full story](#)
16. Thirteen-year old Emmy Whiteman's dessert party netted \$1,800 for the local Little Brothers/Friends of the Elderly... [full story](#)
17. The Ulseth Family of Minneapolis combined their love of food and culture ... [full story](#)
18. The Barnabee family of Illinios visit a nursing home once a week ... [full story](#)
19. The Barney family of Colorado teach their children (ages 8, 6 and 4) money management through charity and the 3S theory of Share-Save-Spend ... [full story](#)
20. Walking for a cure for breast cancer is a Mother's day tradition for Marce Pillar, her kids and her mother ... [full story](#)
21. Craig Falon's and Mary Delander's children lead the way in opening a global door when they host foreign students ... [full story](#)

Our spotlight is on ... the Hanka Family

Shari and Brian Hanka's children, Madeline and Riley, are still too young for preschool, but they're already learning important lessons about compassion and community responsibility. The Hankas, in fact,



make reaching out to others a part of their daily routine. When Shari and her children go to the grocery store, they buy extra granola bars and small boxes of cereal. Back home, Maddy helps put a couple food items and information on various homeless shelters into Ziploc bags. The family always keeps three or four of the bags in each of their vehicles. Then, whenever they see a person who may need some food and comfort, they'll ask "Are you hungry?" and hand them a bag of treats.

The response from recipients, says Shari, has been overwhelmingly positive and grateful. Shari's explanation to Maddy: There are people who don't have as much food as we do, so we share. Shari also reminds Maddy of times their own family has needed help and how the generosity of others lifted them up.

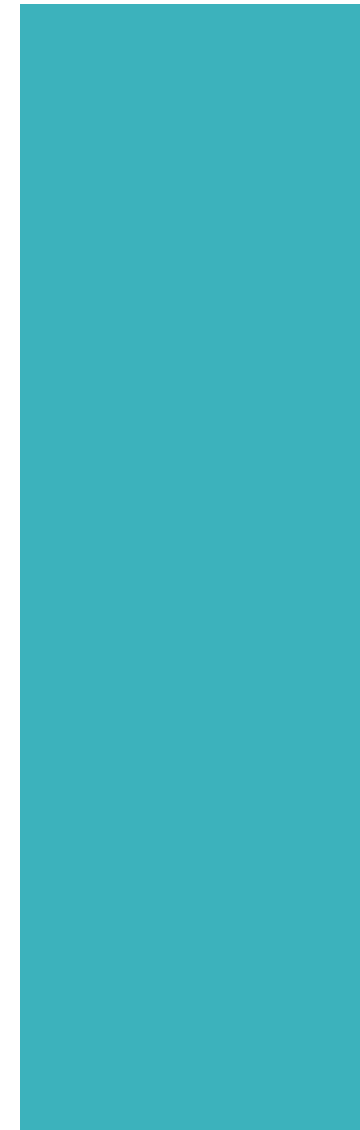
The time they invest in these projects is small, but the lessons for Maddy and Riley are huge. "I hope to instill an attitude of generosity and kindness in my kids," says Shari. "I want them to think globally, and learn about other people and cultures. And I never want them to look down on those in need."

[*return to menu*](#)

Cornelia Elementary School

Today's families are so busy that an additional commitment – even something as worthwhile as community service – can be hard to squeeze onto the to-do list. Apparently these concerns evaporate when the project ideas are hatched right inside the child's school. This approach to volunteerism, it turns out, can also enhance your child's education, lead to families spending time together, and build the school community!

Doing Good Together has been partnering with Cornelia Elementary School in Edina, Minn., to help make it easy for Cornelia families to serve others. The Cornelia DGT team sends a list of 10 simple community service activities home with students each month. Some activities take only 15 minutes to complete, others take a couple hours. Families can choose



to do one project on the list, or several, with the incentive that for every activity accomplished, the child can add one loop to the Cornelia Chain of Caring. The chain already stretches around the school cafeteria.

In addition, Cornelia DGT held the school's first Family Service Night on November 9, 2006. In just two hours, Cornelia families completed an amazing number of projects to benefit those in need. They:

- <!--[if !supportLists]-->Made 300 sandwiches with personal notes for the folks at Simpson Homeless shelter
- <!--[if !supportLists]--> Created and mailed 50 cards to chronically sick children eager for some cheery mail
- <!--[if !supportLists]--><!--[endif]-->Created 46 blankets for children in need of comfort
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->Packaged handmade whisper phones – devices that aid emerging readers – with books and bookmarks for 50 students
- <!--[if !supportLists]-->Stuffed 32 birthday bags for children living in poverty and 100 breakfast bags for the kids at Ronald McDonald House

Each organization was thrilled with the donations, and the families had fun in the process. As one Cornelia parent commented: “Doing Good Together provided positive, hands-on opportunities for both children and adults to work together to make a difference. In addition to having fun, my daughter and I had the chance to talk about people living in very different circumstances from us, and how as individuals and as a community we can help meet their needs. This was a great event!”

[*return to menu*](#)

Anne Blake and her children's Box Project

Seven or eight years ago, Anne Blake was looking for a hands-on way to teach her four children (now ages 8 to 16) about giving back. The Box Project (www.boxproject.org) squarely fit their needs. The organization matches a sponsor (an individual, family or group) with a family living in rural poverty. The sponsor exchanges letters with the family and, once each month, sends a box of material aid (clothing, food, household goods). But Blake values the relationships that develop, like the one between daughter Lilly and her friend Jackson, who's part of their Mississippi match family. After hearing about each other for years, the two 8-year-olds decided to become pen pals. As Blake reported in a recent Box Project newsletter:

“They are keeping the U.S. Postal Service busy with their correspondence. Most of their letters consist of typical pen pal questions, such as “Do you like your teacher? I like mine.” and “How is the weather where you live?” In his most recent letter, however, Jackson captured the essence of The Box Project when he wrote, “I am glad to have you and your family as our friends. I hope me and you can be friends for a LONG time.”

For Blake, this friendship represents the enormous value of this type of family service. Volunteering with The Box Project enables her children to see “that we are all the same, and that we all need to take care of each other.”

[*return to menu*](#)

The Church of St. Patrick

Two hours is how long some of us might spend making a fancy dessert. In that same time -- two hours -- a small group of adults and children filled enough food kits to make 5,000 meals. They were donating their time for Feed My Starving Children, a faith-based nonprofit based in Minnesota. Volunteers stuff packets made up of rice, soy, vitamins and

dehydrated vegetables, which are then distributed to starving children worldwide.

Spending a Saturday morning measuring, pouring, packing and sealing food bags was just the ticket for this handful of families (totaling six adults and six children) from the Church of St. Patrick in Edina, Minn., who did the project as part of the church's new Family Faith Works program. This speedy crew learned that 40,000 children die each day from lack of nutritious food, and that it costs only 15 cents to feed one child for a whole day.

For Lisa Walker and her 10-year-old son, Christopher, the gathering was not only eye-opening—it ignited a passion for service. In addition, “The experience of serving in groups with other St. Pat’s families was heartening and fun, and resulted in strengthening our internal community,” Walker says. “Those who served together now share a special bond.”

[*return to menu*](#)

Juliann McDermott

When Juliann McDermott arrived to teach at Lake Country School in Minneapolis, the Montessori school had no “Trick or Treat for UNICEF.” That’s a program in which children collect donations on Halloween to help UNICEF bring health care, nutrition and education to children around the world. Now, thanks to McDermott’s passion and determination, the school is a veritable UNICEF collecting machine! Last year, students and their families raised over \$3,000 for this United Nations organization. McDermott says such spirit is consistent with the Montessori philosophy, which emphasizes that every child is a contributing member of a diverse global community. With “Trick or Treat for UNICEF,” students realize they can do small things to help people they will never meet.

Here’s how it happens. Come fall, Lake Country students gather for an all-school assembly on United Nations Day, October 24. The children perform skits to promote the UNICEF fundraiser, and teach new students how to build those familiar orange UNICEF boxes. After Halloween, students collect the

contributions and take the money to the bank in carts. They then send thank-you notes to all participants, explaining the impact of their donations on the well-being of children worldwide.

After last Halloween, McDermott asked her students, who are between ages 9 and 12, to write a journal entry about how giving makes them feel. A few responses:

- “It makes me feel like somebody else is happy and whole. And I am not always nice, so it makes me feel nice.”
- “Because of UNICEF I get two times a year to feel great about giving -- Christmas and UNICEF time.”
- “[Giving] is a magical feeling like you are walking on air. The moment you give something away you feel like you have just achieved something special.”
- “Giving ... is an emotion just like happiness, or sadness. You find it when you give to someone who needs your help.”

Individual families can get in the act, too—visit www.unicefusa.org for the how-to’s. When you see UNICEF boxes in your own neighborhood this Halloween, remember that donating means you are supporting critical children’s programs in developing countries, AND teaching a small ghost or princess how good it feels to make a difference.

[return to menu](#)

Sarina Smith's Cards

Sarina Smith, plans to be either an astronaut or an oncologist when she grows up. These are ambitious goals, but she is used to facing tough challenges. Sarina, who’s nearly 10, is a cancer survivor, and also

struggles with diabetes, cerebral palsy and a heart defect.

Yet she remains remarkably positive. Her mother attributes Sarina's outlook to an extraordinarily close family and the "happy mail" she receives from people all over the country, including handmade cards, pictures of people's pets, chatty letters, knock-knock jokes and postcards from exotic locales. It all comes thanks to Hugs and Hope (www.hugsandhope.org), an organization that supports children battling critical illness and their families by encouraging others to send them cheery mail.

Inspired herself, Sarina began making cards for other sick kids from her hospital bed. It quickly became a family project. Sarina's sisters, Elizabeth and Breanna (who also struggles with chronic illness) make cards, too. Their mother, Heather, and their grandmother watch for sales on small items to include in the mailings. Even their cousins, who live near Sarina's family in Philadelphia, help out.

At least once a month, the dining room table is cleared as Heather shows her children photos of the kids from the Hugs and Hope website and tells them about their lives. The children then decide who will receive their cards and gifts. They tend to choose children near their own ages and have "favorites" that they correspond with regularly. Elizabeth is partial to the siblings of the sick children, knowing they also need support. "It's so much fun – working with markers, stickers and glue" says Heather. "And it's definitely made them very charitable children. Whenever we're out shopping, they think first about what other kids may need or want."

Focusing on those who need support also seems to lighten her own family's burden, says Heather. Their Hugs and Hope activities enable her family to find joy in giving

[return to menu](#)

Becky Cook gathers school supplies

It all started in March 2005, when 15-year-old Becky Cook of Cloquet, Minn., noticed an article in *Reader's Digest* appealing for donations from Operation Iraqi Children, a Kansas

City –based nonprofit that helps Americans send school-supply kits to Iraqi children.

Cook wasn't looking for a project to put on her college resume or a way to impress her parents. She was just struck by the plea and wanted to help. She contacted church groups and talked to her assistant principal about what the school district could do. She entered a small advertisement in the local paper -- and became the subject of an entire article. People responded by sending money for the supplies, and moral support for her hard work.

However, Cook realized that to be truly successful she had to raise student interest and reach more people who might contribute. Her solution: create a video. It shows her searching her house for the needed school supplies and, when she finds them (usually under a spotlight-stealing dog), explaining the necessity of each.

Next she received donated bags and boxes from the local Super One grocery, and sent some to every school that agreed to participate. She noted on each bag which school supply (ruler, composition book, paper) a class was assigned to give. A pizza party was the reward for the class contributing the most at each school.

With this effort, plus a speech she gave at her church, the donations poured in. Soon Cook had collected over 2,000 items, enough to create 200 kits. She enlisted the help of her parents, Mary and Jim Cook, to buy zip-lock bags and shuttle her around town. Then, with the help of friends and family, Becky put together the 200 kits and layered them in donated boxes. The Cloquet Mail Station offered a deal on shipping, and off they went to Operation Iraq Children for ultimate distribution by American soldiers.

Cook went into this task with no expectations for how well she could do, but just a hope that she could help someone. At first she didn't think the project would require much time— she'd simply collect school supplies and ship them off. But the deeper she got into it, the more she learned how contagious one person's caring could be. She received thank-you

letters from people all over the city, and lived an experience she won't ever forget.

[*return to menu*](#)

Kid's drama for a cause

This past June in Minneapolis, the hottest ticket in town was the front yard of the Robinson/Cuthbert home, where “Godzilla: The Play” played to packed blankets and lawn chairs. The production, staged in the family’s front yard, had painted cardboard and sheets for backdrops, a tent for the sound guy, and a stage that surrounded the audience. Perhaps most in awe of the neighborhood’s efforts was the Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR), a local nonprofit dedicated to preserving and restoring the river, which received the proceeds from this year’s performances.

This extraordinary neighborhood event started over two years ago, when 9-year-old Ian Maret told his friends, 9-year-old twins Kate and Audrey Cuthbert, that he wanted to put on a production of the Wizard of Oz. The twins’ parents, Louise Robinson and Neal Cuthbert had some theater experience and agreed to help out. Louise found a movie script and edited it down for the kids; her husband designed the sets. The three children did the casting using their friends. Families of the other cast members (about 10 families all together) attended workshops to create the sets. The parents also pitched in to design programs and flyers, provide food, and create costumes. “Everyone’s creative energies get tapped,” says Louise. “We were all amazed at how it came together and how fun it was.”

Although the play wasn’t originally conceived of as an annual fundraiser, the group quickly hit upon this idea as a way to let audience members donate to a cause. The 2004 production raised more than \$800 for the arts program at the local elementary school. Last year the kids and parents did a production of Star Wars, raising money for a sculpture effort by their local park, Brackett. This year, Neal and the children authored “Godzilla: The Play,” a suspenseful story of how the evil GlobalCon Corporation polluted the Mississippi Gorge under the guise of cleaning it up. (All looks lost until Godzilla, who now lives in the backwaters of the Upper Mississippi, arrives to save the day.) Some 500 people attended the four performances, raising a phenomenal \$1,600 for FMR. Later this month, the cast and their families will



get to tour the gorge and learn more about how their donation will be used to make a difference.

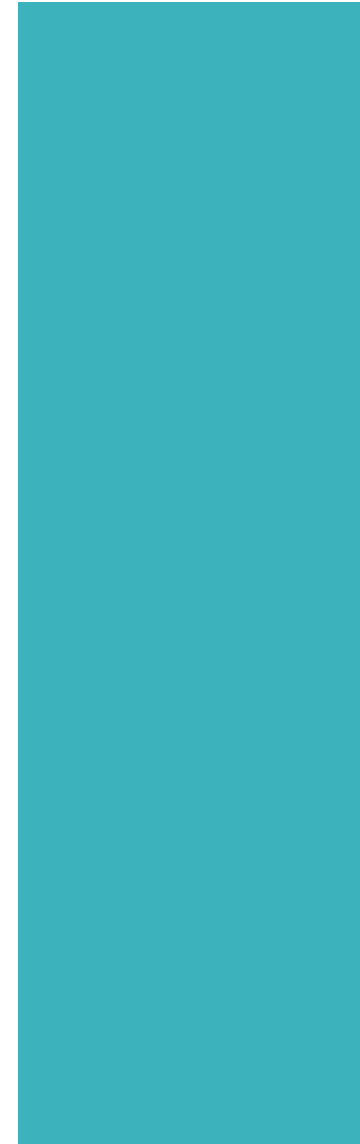
“There is a strong camaraderie among the kids and the families, and they all have a real sense of achievement as a group,” says Louise. “This wasn’t something we set out to create, but it has evolved into something quite special and amazing.”

[*return to menu*](#)

The Patton Family's adopted grandmother

When Shelly Patton met 68-year-old Agnes Pilane four years ago, Patton knew right away that they had a bond. Both women live in Atlanta, far from family. Patton’s parents and siblings are in California and Miss Agnes’s relatives are in South Africa, where she lived until 1994. Both women yearned to have family nearby. Through a program called “Adopt-a-Grandparent,” part of FCS Urban Ministries in Atlanta, Patton and Miss Agnes became each other’s family. Patton visits Miss Agnes once every couple weeks in the senior high rise where she lives and takes food to her from a local food cooperative. They also talk on the phone once or twice a week. The two trust each other without question, take care of each other and share common interests. “She treats me like one of her own and I treat her like one of my own,” says Patton.

When Patton and her husband brought a foster son, seven-year-old Eric, into their lives eight months ago, the circle of caring expanded. Now Eric accompanies Patton on almost all her visits to her adopted granny. Miss Agnes took to Eric right away, says Patton, and the feeling was clearly mutual. Although some of Eric’s enthusiasm for the visits involves the cable TV and treats that Miss Agnes is quick to provide, the relationship goes much deeper than that. “There’s a spiritual connection between the two of them that’s hard to communicate,” says Patton. “But you can just feel her love for him.”



[return to menu](#)

Sarah Ingebritsen

Twenty-year-old Sarah Ingebritsen has twice been blessed with life-changing family volunteer vacation experiences. In the summer of 2000, she and her parents, Joe Chrastil and Jean Ingebritsen, and her sister, Kim Ingebritsen, now 16, spent two and a half months in Nueva Vida, Nicaragua, a refugee settlement of 12,000 people who lost their homes to Hurricane Mitch. They helped build a new health clinic, a project arranged through Jubilee House Community.

It was an unforgettable summer, one the family was eager to share back home in Spokane, Washington. After making a presentation to their church's youth group, the students of Westminster United Church of Christ determined almost immediately to make their own journey to Nueva Vida. After several years of planning and fundraising, the trip became a reality. In the summer of 2004, seven students (including Sarah), several parents and the youth group director set out for Nueva Vida. This time the job was to create and plant medicinal herb gardens. (Although the community now had a low-cost health clinic, the cost of prescription drugs was most often prohibitive for the residents.) The local children who pitched in earned free treatment and medicine for their family. "The most difficult part was that we got so close to the people – particularly the children – and then we had to leave," says Sarah. "But the relationships and connections were also the best part."

An expert on medicinal herbs from Cuba guided the process. The work was hard, but the group got breaks to visit other parts of Nicaragua, including the opportunity to see a traditional potter at work, hike around a volcano, visit a market in Managua, and make some wonderful friends. "You see a way of life that you've never been exposed to," Sarah says,



“and that changes you forever.”

[return to menu](#)

The Bascom family in the great outdoors

Every year, volunteers meet at the Three Rivers Park District in Minnesota to harvest prairie seeds, which are then used for prairie restoration and enhancement projects in our park reserves. When Julie Bascom suggested that her family might spend one afternoon helping out, the response was less than enthusiastic. “Service is your thing, not mine,” moaned her daughter, Jordan, then 13.

Not to be deterred, Julie convinced her husband and three children to head to Crow-Hassan Park and give the project a try. Fortunately, the fall day was beautiful – sunny, breezy and warm. Along with a couple of other families, the Bascoms pulled seeds from native plants and filled their bags. The group leader explained that the seeds would be dried, cleaned and replanted to ensure that native vegetation continues to regenerate. It is a process, she added, that takes many hands.

For Julie, the simple task was surprisingly fun and meditative—and took her back to her farming roots. Other family members found their own reasons for enjoyment. Daughter Jordan, who had brought along a friend to help, thrived on the socializing and the methodical, precise nature of the work, while 10-year-old John Robert was thrilled to be outside, run around and prove that he could fill his bag most quickly.

Julie’s bag of snacks helped make the outing a success, as did the fact that everyone could immediately see the results of their hard work. Julie has always felt that family service is critical to raising compassionate, socially aware children, and she believes that environmental stewardship is an integral part of that. “I want my kids to understand and appreciate our environment and our world,” she says. “You could just feel that process happening out there on the prairie. We will never forget it.”

[return to menu](#)



The Steefel/Moore Family

One Sunday morning a month, Sarah Steefel and her husband, Jim Moore, arrive at Sharing and Caring Hands, a downtown Minneapolis facility for people in poverty, with children Laura and Dave, now 17 and 15, respectively. They immediately get to work preparing the day's lunch menu—which on this day includes chili dogs, corn, fruit, milk and cookies. For 45 minutes, the family, along with four other families, cook, chop, mix and pour as they prepare for the over 200 guests (men, women and a few children) that will arrive by 11:15 am.

The Steefel-Moore family has been helping cook and serve for almost a year. There is no hint that the teens (or their parents) find the commitment burdensome. In fact, Laura believes that the benefits are enormous – and a little unexpected. She was surprised by both the diversity and the kindness of the guests, and found her interaction with them to be both personal and rewarding. “It makes me wonder about their lives, where they'll sleep and what their stories are,” says Laura. She adds that despite their difficult circumstances, nearly all of the guests are upbeat and courteous, and they often express gratitude for both the food and the volunteers as they go through the cafeteria-style line.

Laura admits that many kids her age are much too self-focused, and she thinks spending some time volunteering can give teens a new perspective. “When I see what other people struggle with, it makes me more grateful for what I have – a home, plenty of food and a stable family,” says Laura. Her father, Jim Moore, sees benefits as well. “Our family puts aside our differences and really comes together around this,” he says. “We all feel we're doing a good thing.”

[*return to menu*](#)

Breck School

When school started in 2005 for one 4th grade class at Breck School in Minneapolis, the families wanted to get to know one another. Instead of throwing a class party or picnic, they got acquainted while serving the community. Everyone spent one Saturday morning in

November helping out at STEP, a nonprofit organization that assists residents of St. Louis Park meet basic needs of food, housing, transportation, health care and clothing. The families stocked food shelves, packed food bags, and learned what many hadn't known -- that hunger and inadequate nutrition are an unfortunate reality in the community.

The experience, says Pam Hasselbring, one of the parents who helped organize the event, was educational, gratifying and a lot of fun. Most of the families seemed inclined to help well past the two hours allotted for the project. "I think now that families realize how easy it is to help -- and how much they enjoyed it -- they're more likely to volunteer again," says Hasselbring.

[*return to menu*](#)

Ben and David White

Ben (10) and David (7) White have seen a mountain of toys. But their excitement didn't come from receiving or playing with those toys. Their excitement came from helping send those toys to other kids. Their father, Jeremy White, a den leader for Pack 223 in St. Paul, Minnesota, has organized a scout service activity for the pack at Toys for Tots the past three years. This past December, some 20-25 families with scouts and siblings helped make a dent in the mountain by sorting toys into bins organized by gender and age group. Some of the older children also worked with a few parents to pack and tape boxes.

Jeremy says that the service events tend to be the most popular among the scouts. And during a time of year when parents worry about commercialism and toy greed, he says, "It tickles me that my kids' favorite cub scout event involves helping other kids. I can't help thinking that will be good for their souls." In the case of Toys for Tots, it is probably easy



for the kids to identify with a mountain of toys that is many times over their heads. The event was scheduled for 6:30-8:30pm on a Wednesday when no other groups were scheduled. Families were free to be a little late if dinner conflicted and could also leave a little early for bedtimes. Jeremy says that it seems to work best to ask Toys for Tots when volunteers were needed rather than try to work around every family's schedule. And that also "puts Toys for Tots needs first."

[*return to menu*](#)

The Mathewsons

A small, dark-haired, five-year-old boy curled himself into a ball in the hallway outside the kitchen area of the Minneapolis Crisis Nursery. He was quietly crying and kept asking when his mom was coming back. Like the other children at this south Minneapolis safe haven for kids, the boy and his brother were spending a few days while their mother resolved a family crisis so she could better care for her sons. Several staff members tried to cajole him into eating lunch, but he refused. Finally, Quinn Mathewson, a 14-year-old Cook for Kids volunteer settled herself on the floor and began talking to the boy. Soon he was eating his lunch, his body pressed against Quinn's. "Teens can sometimes help these kids in a way that adults just can't," says Quinn's mother, Shari Mathewson

Twice each month, Quinn and her mom cook a meal for the kids at the Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, which cares for children under age six. Four to six volunteers bring kid-friendly food, prepare it and then serve the children and help them eat. Then they do clean-up. Quinn, her mom and two friends from school come on Sundays, and the two of them repeat the process with Quinn's cousins and aunt on Friday nights. It only takes two hours of their time, but the impact can be profound. "Kids are pretty narcissistic as teenagers and it's hard for them to see out of their own little world," says Mathewson. "But this has given Quinn

the ability to look beyond herself, and the opportunity to be part of a larger community.”

[*return to menu*](#)

Dessert Party

At just 13 years old, Emmy Whiteman initiated a family volunteer project that netted the local Little Brothers/Friends of the Elderly a tidy \$1,800. Emmy was already familiar with the organization through her Girl Scout troop. But when the troop switched to other community service projects, Emmy wanted to continue helping Little Brothers, which serves vulnerable elderly people. She got her chance when she received a mailing saying the organization needed to raise \$100,000—and they were asking 100 people to raise \$1,000 each. Emmy decided to sponsor a dessert party. After speaking with the development director at Little Brothers, she made decorations, sent out invitations and prepared desserts while her parents, according to her mother, Nora, were the quiet guiding voices that helped her know what steps to take and suggested ways to keep the party manageable for her. It remained Emmy’s event from start to finish; she greeted guests when they arrived and thanked when they left, along with requesting a donation. She raised over \$900, an amount matched by the national Little Brothers organization. The experience was character building for Emmy, says Nora: “It allowed her to see how the actions of one person can have a large ripple effect.”

[*return to menu*](#)

Love of food and culture

Tom and Anne Ulseth of Minneapolis and their four daughters combined their love of food and culture to find a volunteer experience that's become a family tradition. Every holiday season, through the Minnesota International Center, they host guests visiting the United States. Their visitors have come from France, Korea, Mongolia, Bulgaria, Japan, Pakistan and other countries around the globe. Their four daughters have grown up learning about other cultures, and have enjoyed sharing their customs as



well.

After their first dinner hosting experience, the Ulseths began hosting students during the school year and summer months, and also traveling outside of the United States. Their oldest daughter decided to minor in Spanish and spent a semester in Spain.

By opening their home to international guests, the Ulseth Family continually gains new insights into today's world in an informal way. They've found that in these rapidly-changing times, hosting international guests promotes global exchange and understanding between citizens of the world.

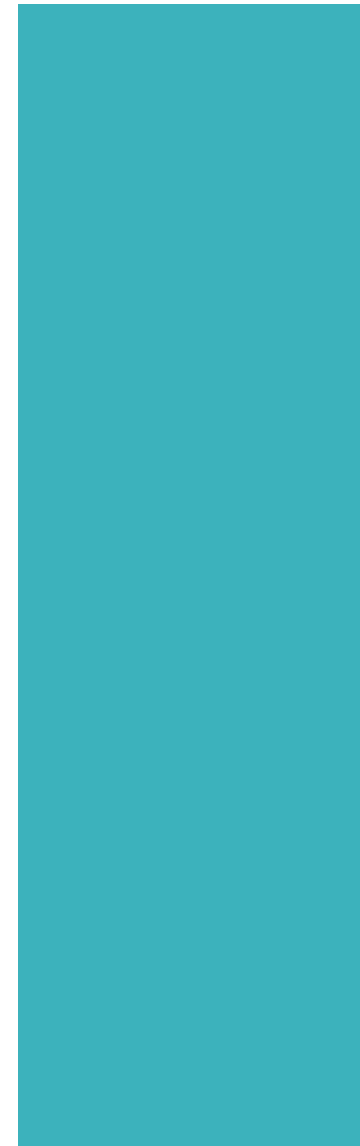
[*return to menu*](#)

Friends of all ages

Five-year-old Josie Barnabee, of Libertyville, Ill., and her 3-year-old brother, Ben, have more “honorary” grandparents than they can count. Since they were babies, they’ve spent one morning a week at Winchester House, a local nursing home, where they exchange hugs, sing songs, play games, and talk with the elderly residents. “When they walk out of the elevator, the residents come to life,” says their mom, Jenny.

Although school schedules and other obligations mean visits are becoming less regular, the family still drops by to spend time with their elderly friends. They sometimes bring books, games or dolls to share, or they simply sit on their “grandparents” laps and sing songs together. At Halloween the children show off their costumes.

The benefits for her children are enormous, says Jenny. When Jenny’s father-in-law was ill last fall, Josie and Ben were the only grandchildren unafraid to spend time with him while he was bedridden. Their years at Winchester House have taught them that failing health, disabilities and aging are a natural part of life and not to be feared.



Jenny admits that getting the kids bundled up in subzero weather and interacting with nursing home residents who are sometimes unhappy or ill can be a challenge. But the difficulties are dwarfed by the love and affection her kids receive from the residents, and her knowledge that spending time with other generations enriches the lives of everyone involved.

[return to menu](#)

Charity Begins at Home

To teach money management to their kids, Anne and Tom Barney of Durango, Colorado, use the “3S theory” – saving, spending and sharing. Every Sunday, which is allowance day, the children (Emily, 8, Sarah, 6 and Will, 4) put part of their money into a wallet for spending, part into a piggy bank for saving and the final portion into a family jar – prominently placed on the kitchen counter – for sharing. The family decides together where the “sharing money” will go. Generally the kids divide their bounty into three equal portions, but the week the family spent volunteering after the area’s devastating fire, Emily made the decision to share all of her allowance with victims of the disaster. Anne Barney feels that the family’s emphasis on community service, assisting friends and neighbors in need, and donating to charity is helping her children develop a conscience. “I tell my kids that it’s not about us and what we’re going to get,” says Barney. “We try to assist the people in our own community who are in need. And we want our children to see that the world is better because of what they do. They are given talents and gifts from God that they can use to serve others. That’s the most important lesson I want my children to learn.”

[return to menu](#)

Walking for a Cure



Marce Piller has started a Mother's Day tradition for her family. On that day, she and her mom take Marce's two small children, Lauren and Blake, plus assorted friends on a 3.5 mile Family Fun Walk to raise money for breast cancer. The Pillers put the kids in a double stroller (along with a few snacks and toys) and walk along with thousands of other like-minded people to help fight a disease that takes the lives of nearly 40,000 women each year. "Lauren doesn't really understand about breast cancer," says Piller, "but she understands we're doing something important in support of the community."

[return to menu](#)

Welcoming the World

Craig Falon and Mary Delander discovered that a common language is definitely not a prerequisite for kids to enjoy playing together. Each summer, their local YMCA encourages children from Osaka, Japan, to visit the United States for three weeks of camping, a home stay with an American family, and a trip to Disneyland. The Falon-Delander family has volunteered to be hosts for the last 8 years. But while they struggled to communicate with their Japanese visitors (who were usually 13 or 14 years old), their three children, Jessie, 14, Leah, 12, and Evan, 9, didn't have any difficulty at all. They simply had fun with their new friends – playing soccer, going to the mall, swimming in a nearby lake -- and learned some valuable lessons along the way. "Hosting foreign students provides an awareness that people have different ways of doing things," says Delander. "And as a whole family, we're more worldly, we think more globally."

[return to menu](#)





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