

## Get Active!

### 2015 FCE International/Citizenship Leader Lesson

#### Goal of Lesson:

Participants will gain:

- An understanding of what a good citizen is
- Ideas for getting involved with their community

There are many reasons American's love all the festivities and the good cheer that is being passed around during the holidays. It's the time during the year that we are focused on celebrating with others, connecting with friends and family and in general, even strangers are greeted with a friendly "hello" and smile. It's easy during the year to lose that open, friendliness and get focused on ourselves, the problems we face or the work we have to finish. Often times it is said "remember the good ole days?" in reference to how people treated one another and the feeling of community that was shared. In today's society of immediate answers, entitlement and technology, sadly, we are losing the feel of small towns and caring for one another.

Citizen, in the dictionary, is described as an inhabitant of a city or town and especially one entitled to the rights and privileges of a freeman. Looking just five words lower in the dictionary you'll find the word "Citizenship" and this means "the qualities that a person is expected to have as a responsible member of a community; the fact or status of being a citizen of a particular place". There are a lot of health benefits of helping others, and providing a service for your community that will help a lot of people and to make it even better...there are hundreds of ways to make a difference in the lives of those around us locally and across the borders to other countries.

In a review of all research, the Corporation of National and Community Service reported that those who volunteer report "higher levels of happiness, life-satisfaction, self-esteem, a sense of control over life, and physical health, as well as lower levels of depression" (Grimm, Spring, Dietz, 2007). This same study indicates that "those who volunteer at an earlier stage are less likely to suffer from ill health later in life, thereby offering up the possibility that the best way to prevent poor health in the future is to volunteer" (Grimm, Spring, Dietz, 2007). Volunteering your time in your community is a great way to not only benefit others around you, but to have a profound effect on your personal well-being both physically and mentally.

There are a lot of creative ways to be a good citizen...here are fifteen ideas to get you started on a journey of volunteering and making your world a better place in which to live!

- 1) Take a welcome basket (full of food, local goodies or housewarming gift) to new neighbors.
- 2) Certificates of Service – have a young mom, an elderly individual, or a bachelor in your area? Make certificates with acts of services that you can perform for them to cash in. Ideas could include: trip to the grocery store, babysitting kids for an hour, free laundry washing, washing windows, or making a meal!
- 3) Troops – send cards, letters, coupons or care packages to our troops. The Red Cross sends mail there or find a soldier you (or a family member/friend knows) and send them some love from home.
- 4) Samaritan's Purse – it's a local organization that helps individuals across the world...from natural disasters, to military families, to helping refugees, there's a lot of ways to get involved.
- 5) Operation Christmas Child – pack a shoe box for a boy or a girl in another country and take it a step further by going to volunteer to process boxes at your local processing center.
- 6) The Salvation Army – volunteer to be a bell-ringer or donate some presents to give to children who weren't adopted through the holiday season.
- 7) Drive-Through Sharing – when going through a drive through and wanting to make a difference...pay for the meal behind you. Feel free to share a positive or uplifting message with the cashier for them and the person you're paying for. (Hint...this also works at grocery stores or supermarkets, if you're feeling daring!)
- 8) Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities– volunteer for a reading hour, play some music or just go and visit with the individuals living there. You can also go to a library and volunteer to have reading time for the children.
- 9) Community Organizations – are always looking for volunteers. Check with coalitions, Extension offices, pregnancy centers and even churches...if you're willing, they will put you to work!
- 10) Baby Love – volunteer at a local hospital to help cuddle babies and give them some love. Take an extra step and organize a donation box for baby blankets or items for needy families to be able to have. Take it a step further at the hospital and go to other wards and cheer up family members or children who are in the hospital. (Cancer wards are a great place to serve and encourage people)
- 11) Blood Drives – donate some blood, or plasma, to help someone who is in need!
- 12) Schools – volunteer at the school to sit as a Teacher's Aid, help with afterschool programs or bring a snack for a party. Ask the teachers and secretaries what they need help with!
- 13) Organize a community wide recycling campaign...you could also have an energy campaign (promote using florescent bulbs) or conserving water! Make fliers, talk with neighbors and spread awareness to make the community a safer, healthier and cheaper place to live!
- 14) Community Clean-Up – organize a clean-up day for your community and gather litter, plant new trees or flowers, paint fences or buildings, mow yards, etc. etc. etc. BE CREATIVE! 😊

15) Volunteer Match Organization ([www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org)) is a great place to type in your town and discover local places to volunteer. Website provides areas of interest for volunteers as well as contact information! They also have a link for non-profits that you, as a volunteer or donor, can help support!

### Activity: Handmade Cards of Encouragement

#### Items You Need:

- Cardstock (you can get pre-cut sheets, or take an 8.5x11 sheet of paper and cut in half to make the right card size)
- Stamps
- Ink
- Pen/pencil
- Envelope
- Scissors/Paper Cutter
- Punches (optional)
- Glitter (optional)
- Buttons (optional)
- Ribbon (optional)

#### Steps:

- Fold cardstock in half to make your card.
- Design the front, with happy sayings, stamps, glitter, ribbon, buttons, etc. etc. (this is where you get to put your personality into your card) \*
- Write a special message on the inside
- Decorate your envelope & address the envelope
- Send or hand deliver (with a smile and a hug) your card to someone in need of encouragement!

\*If you want a specific card design to use with your club, please ask your local Extension Agent for an idea or a simple design.

#### Sources:

Citizen. (n.d.). Retrieved December 2, 2014, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/citizen>

Citizenship. (n.d.). Retrieved December 2, 2014, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/citizenship>

Grimm, R., Spring, K., & Dietz, N. (2007, January 1). The Health Benefits of Volunteering. Retrieved December 10, 2014, from [http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07\\_0506\\_hbr.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf)