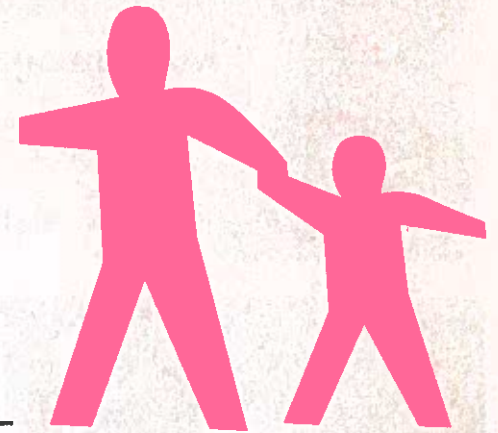


# Teach your children well

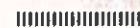


*How to change “give me” into “give”*

BY KRISTEN DE DEYN KIRK



A FRIEND RECENTLY said that she wants two things for her children: One, for them to be able to provide for themselves, and two, for them to be good stewards in society. I was so impressed with her goals that I instantly adopted them — and also became instantly worried: I have a plan for accomplishing the first goal (thank you, wonderful public school system), but besides nagging my children, how exactly could I also accomplish the second goal? Thankfully, a few local experts have come to my rescue with practical advice:



## 1. Lead by example

Diane Hotaling, director of community college, coordinates volunteer efforts at her school, and she also takes time to volunteer on her own. Whether it's for work or personal reasons, she tells her children, ages 25 and 9, about it.

“They see what I do as service,” she says, “whether or not it's work-related and that's what I want them to learn about.”

She also lets her daughter know that sometimes she helps simply by being good for the babysitter.

“I can't always bring her with me,” says Hotaling, “so I explain that her ‘job’ in that case to stay with the sitter and make it possible for me to go do something good.”

## 2. Pick an appropriate activity

Hotaling noted that she hasn't always brought her kids with her when volunteering because sometimes the work was too involved or the children might have been tempted to act inappropriately.

“I've heard other children blurt out

things,” she explains. “They might say ‘why is he so dirty?’, when they see a homeless person who is getting a free meal. They didn't understand yet that such words could be hurtful.”

Until you can be sure your child will feel comfortable and act appropriately, you might have to say no to some opportunities.

## 3. Do your research

Hampton Roads has over 500 non-profit organizations that can use your help, says Beth Lloyd, president and CEO of VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads. With so many possibilities, you're highly likely to find something that is just right for you. Lloyd's web site, [www.volunteerhr.org](http://www.volunteerhr.org), helps you explore the possibilities in an easy way: You can search by type of organization, by zip code, and by time of day.

“Pick what you're passionate about,” says Lloyd. “You need to be excited about what you're doing and you'll stay with it.”

VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads has also published a non-profit resource guide with details on every local group. It costs \$25. Lloyd suggests two books as well for parents looking to motivate their children: *Raising Charitable Children* by Carol Weisman and *Helping Out is Cool* by Ellen Feinman Moss.

## The earlier you start children volunteering, the better.



### 4. Keep it simple

Not everything you do has to involve a lot of hours, travel or money. Chenequa Moulds, parent education coordinator with Hampton Healthy Families Partnerships, suggests teaching children the importance of giving by going through their toys and selecting some to donate to underprivileged children.

"This is a good time to do it because you can remind your children that you have to make room for new toys they'll get during the holidays," says Moulds. "Explain you'll donate them to charity and that they should help with the decision and organizing. You can say to them, 'Remember how this toy made you feel when you got it? We want to do that for another child.'"

She also suggests having your child pick an angel from the Angel Trees you can find in most local malls during the holidays. The angel tags list a gift that a young person would like. Ask your child to pick out the gift and help you wrap it. He or she could also come with you to drop it off.

If you'd rather help an older population, your family could share its magazines. Moulds takes the labels off of hers and donates them to a nearby nursing home. The residents get new reader material, and Moulds doesn't have to worry about clutter at home.

Another way to help is even easier: VOLUNTEER Hampton Roads President

Beth Lloyd recommends children helping older neighbors with carrying in their groceries or mowing the lawn for free.

### 5. Start young

Hotaling, Lloyd and Moulds all agree that the earlier you start children volunteering, the better. Remember, you can bring them along to activities you choose at first or get them involved with collecting toys, presents or magazines as suggested above. What you do doesn't matter as much as doing something. To encourage charitable giving, talk to your children about their allowance. In some families, children save a third, spend a third and donate a third.

### 6. Turn to the schools

Many states require students to perform some type of community service. Wisely, they do not call it "volunteer work," which would be an oxymoron, but they see the importance of teaching children to help others. Virginia does not require community service for graduation, but some local public and private school do include it in their curriculum. Look for opportunities that might exist at school - or talk to teachers and administrators about starting some.

College-age children can look for fall and spring break "vacations" that involve community service. Virginia Wesleyan College offers several options. This is a

good option for students who are loaded with classes and work and feel like they don't have time in their weekly schedule for community service but still want to do something to give back.

### 7. Peer pressure

Tweens and teens might be more interested in helping others when they see their friends doing so, or they can invite their friends to join them in the process. It makes sense that they'll be more interested in anything that allows them to stay with their posse. You know how they like to travel in packs from age 11 and up. You can suggest an activity a group of them can do or you can listen carefully to find a friend who is already doing some community service and then figure out how your child can join in.

Another opportunity is birthdays. Maybe your child and his or her friends can do a special activity - such as a fundraising walk or dance - in honor of a birthday. Or ask that gifts be purchased for a charity instead of for your child.

Talk with your child about all of the community service possibilities and get ready to be pleasantly surprised:

"We like to think young people don't care, but that's not my experience," says Hotaling. "It's (getting involved) is a matter of opportunity and exposure. When the light bulb goes off, their life takes off."