



Top 10 Outdoor Service Projects for Children (and 10 Things to Always Remember) *by Heather Dunn*

1. Clean up a neighboring church. Pick up trash, plant flowers, wash outdoor signs, add mulch, rake leaves, etc. If you're changing anything, be sure to get permission.

2. Have a garage sale for the Jr. or Sr. High mission trip. Challenge kids to find stuff they can part with—with parental permission, of course. Collect for several weeks, and then have an after-church sale in the parking lot.

3. Wash cars while everyone's in church. Give groups of 4-5 students a bucket of soapy water and sponges. Target the dirtiest cars. Have adults wash off the soap and do quality checks.

4. Help in a grocery store parking lot. Collect carts, help carry or unload groceries, offer cheery hellos and good-byes, and hand out cookies. Have kids pool their allowance or offering money to pay for groceries for someone who looks like they could use it.

5. Go on a "bigger and better" scavenger hunt. Try to get items for a food or clothing ministry. Help kids make a cool craft or learn a fun song, then send them out in small groups into nearby neighborhoods. Send along donation receipts. Challenge kids to knock on doors and politely explain their need, offering to trade what they have for anything bigger or better.

6. Make cards for someone who's seriously ill. Go outside with a camera and ask kids to figure out 52 poses and capture each one. Fold 52 half sheets of paper. Use the photos as covers for each card. Let students write notes of encouragement inside. Be creative. Add sand, leaves and other outdoor finds. Have kids help with stamps and addresses. Pray for the addressee and the messages in the cards. Send cards once a week for a year.

7. Clean up a local school grounds regularly. Talk with the principal to get permission. Ask when it's the messiest and plan accordingly. Ask everyone to bring a trash bag and their own work gloves.

8. Reach out to a local retirement community. Take a regular afternoon and minister to the residents. Ladies love to have their nails painted. Most love to reminisce about their childhood, plant flowers, go for a walk, hear songs, share ice cream, and play games.

9. Invade a park. Go with the plan of looking for 20 ways to serve others. Pick up trash, push children on swings, take balls and start fun games, hand out popsicles, pet dogs, strike up conversations with the goal of listening, etc.

10. Adopt a grandparent. Find one older person in your congregation who needs help. Visit monthly to help rake leaves, pull weeds, wash windows, decorate for Christmas, mulch flowerbeds, etc. While there, spend time talking, singing and having a simple snack.

ALWAYS:

Pray before you go

Take a camera

Collect signed permission slips

Tell kids about your expectations

Recruit plenty of adult help

Choose what's appropriate for your kids

Let parents and the church know what you're doing ahead of time

Make printed cards explaining what you're doing and why

Keep plans simple

Have a bad weather plan

