

Mitzvah Project

Rabbi Tarfon said, "You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to abstain from it." This quote expresses the Jewish value of working to help those who are in need. We expect b'nei mitzvah students to have completed at least 18 hours of volunteer work before the date of his/her bar/bat mitzvah service. We encourage students to choose "hands-on" projects that involve personal service. Many of these organizations require parents to accompany youth volunteers.

Community Service Ideas:

Austin Animal Center is the largest municipal animal shelter in Central Texas, provides shelter to 23,000 animals annually and services to Austin/Travis County.

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/individual-aac-volunteer>

Austin Yellow Bike Project is an all-volunteer non-profit initiative to put bicycles on the streets of Austin and Central Texas by operating community bike shops, teaching bike mechanics and maintenance, and acting as a local bike advocacy group. <http://austinyellowbike.org>

Austin Habitat for Humanity offers many ways for youth to volunteer- landscaping, planting trees, raising awareness or providing lunch for volunteers who are building.

www.austinhabitat.org/youth

Austin Parks Foundation connects people to resources and partners to develop and improve parks. Volunteers participate in activities including erosion control, mulching, tree-planting, eradicating invasive species and trash pick-up. www.austinparks.org

Austin Pets Alive! is a volunteer run non-profit animal rescue group committed to promoting and providing the resources, education and programs needed to eliminate the killing of homeless companion animals. Must be 12 to volunteer. www.austinpetsalive.org

Bake A Wish is a volunteer run non-profit organization who provide free, homemade birthday cakes to neglected, abused and/or abandoned children and also the elderly and disables who would not otherwise receive a birthday cake. Volunteers bake and deliver cakes.

www.bakeawishaustin.org

Central Texas Food Bank is the largest hunger-relief charity in Central Texas, serving more than 46,000 people each week. There are family volunteer times when youth can participate.

www.centraltexasfoodbank.org

Circle of Friends is an Alzheimer's respite group that meets at CBI every Thursday morning from 9am-2pm. This is a great summer time, or school break idea. For information, contact Theresa Lyons at tlyons@mac.com.

Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) is a group of religious congregations that provide food and shelter to meet the immediate needs of families in crisis. Four times a year, CBI opens our

facilities to homeless families with children. Some volunteer activities are setting up classrooms as bedrooms, bringing part of a meal to CBI, providing supplies ahead of time that we need for the families, and serving meals. To volunteer, please contact Sam & Ava Spetalnick at cbihosting@gmail.com.

Jewish Family Services is the division of the JCAA that provides mental health and social services to the Austin Jewish and general community. JFS offers trained volunteer outreach to elders who live in senior residential settings to bring meaningful, interpersonal connections and Jewish programs to them where they reside. For more information, contact JFS Outreach & Volunteer Coordinator Mary Axelrud at mary.axelrud@shalomaustin.org or call 512-250-1043.

Keep Austin Beautiful provides resources and education to engage citizens in building a more beautiful community. Volunteers work on service projects, including creek and road cleanups. <http://keepaustinbeautiful.org/volunteer>

Little Helping Hands facilitates family volunteering by organizing and leading volunteer activities with various organizations. Opportunities are suitable for ages 3-17. For older kids and teens, they offer educational and leadership programs to enhance the learning that comes out of service experiences. www.littlehelpinghands.org

Meals on Wheels Central Texas-Greater Austin Area makes and delivers meals to homebound members of the community, including those age 60 and older. Volunteers deliver meals by car. www.mealsonwheelscentraltexas.org

Mobile Loaves & Fishes is a social outreach ministry for the homeless and working poor. Volunteers can help prepare and deliver meals through the St. John Neumann Commissary or work on the Community First Village homes and gardens. www.mlf.org/volunteer

Refugee Services of Texas a social service agency dedicated to providing resettlement services to refugees and other displaced persons. Youth appropriate opportunities include donation collection, apartment set-up, helping families explore Austin and child-care. Volunteers must attend a hour-long training session offered the first Tuesday of each month. <http://www.rstx.org/volunteer>

Sustainable Food Center is in charge of the SFC Farmers Market and creates opportunities for individuals to makes healthy food choices and participate in a local food system. Youth participation in volunteer opportunities will depend on the job. Volunteers must attend an hour-long orientation session. www.sustainablefoodcenter.org