

Animal Shelter Helpers

SAMPLE ORGANIZATION	APPROPRIATE AGE RANGE	TIME REQUIRED
Local animal shelter, humane society, animal rescue, or pet adoption organization	Ages 5–18+ Younger children can make blankets, toys, and donation kits; older children and teens can help with approved shelter tasks under supervision.	1½–3 hours

What Will Families Do?

Families help a local animal shelter care for animals and prepare them for adoption. Depending on the shelter's needs and volunteer rules, families might organize donations, clean approved areas, prepare food or supply stations, make enrichment toys, or help with approved animal-socialization activities. Families can also make simple fleece blankets or other shelter-approved bedding for animals to sleep on, snuggle with, or play with. Younger children can participate from home by making blankets and enrichment items if they are too young to volunteer inside the shelter.

Potential Supplies

For the Animals	For Blanket Making	For Shelter Helpers
Shelter-approved treats or food	Fleece fabric	Work gloves
Approved toys / enrichment materials	Fabric scissors	Cleaning supplies approved by shelter
Pet beds or bedding if requested	Rulers / measuring tape	Trash & recycling bags
Paper towels or other requested supplies	Optional sewing supplies	Hand sanitizer
Donation boxes or reusable containers	Simple no-sew blanket materials	Water bottles / refreshments

POSSIBLE FUNDS NEEDED	SERVICE IMPACT
\$50–\$250 , depending on the project. Costs may include fleece, scissors, shelter-approved toys or supplies, cleaning materials, and requested food or treats. Donated materials can reduce the cost.	Provides practical help to an animal shelter while giving animals comfort, enrichment, and better care. Blankets and enrichment items can be especially useful because they can be used by animals waiting for adoption.

Why This Works for Families

This project has something for almost every age. Young children can make simple no-sew fleece blankets or help decorate donation boxes, while older children can assemble enrichment items and take on approved shelter tasks. Families also get to learn about responsible pet care and the importance of helping animals find safe, loving homes.

Important Shelter Rule

Ask first! Every shelter has different rules about volunteers, animal interaction, blankets, toys, fabrics, food, and cleaning products. Contact the shelter before the project and ask exactly what they need and what materials they can safely accept.

ROTARY FAMILY SERVICE IDEA • Make a blanket-making station part of the family service day so even young children can create something an animal will use.

First Responder Thank-You Kits

SAMPLE ORGANIZATION	APPROPRIATE AGE RANGE	TIME REQUIRED
Local fire department, EMS agency, police department, or first responder organization	Ages 5–18+ Younger children can make cards and help assemble kits; older children and teens can help organize supplies and prepare larger quantities.	1½–2 hours

What Will Families Do?

Families prepare small thank-you kits for local firefighters, police officers, EMTs, dispatchers, or other first responders. Each kit can include a handwritten thank-you card from a child along with practical snacks or comfort items approved by the department. Families can work together to sort supplies, decorate cards, assemble kits, and deliver them to the organization. Before purchasing anything, ask the organization what items they can accept and what would actually be useful.

Potential Supplies

For the Kits	For Kids	For Assembly
Individually packaged snacks	Cardstock / construction paper	Gift bags or reusable bags
Bottled water or approved drinks	Markers, crayons & colored pencils	Tissue paper
Coffee or tea supplies if requested	Stickers & decorations	Labels / thank-you tags
Hand lotion or lip balm if approved	Envelopes	Packing tape
Other department-requested items	Child-safe scissors	Boxes for transporting finished kits

POSSIBLE FUNDS NEEDED	SERVICE IMPACT
\$100–\$300 , depending on the number of kits and what families donate. Costs may include snacks, drinks, bags, cards, art supplies, and other requested items.	Shows appreciation for the people who respond when our community needs help. The project gives children a personal way to say thank you while strengthening connections between families and local first responders.

Why This Works for Families

Every age can participate. Young children can draw pictures and write simple thank-you messages, while older children can help organize supplies and assemble complete kits. The project is inexpensive, creative, and gives families the chance to personally meet or thank people who serve their community.

ROTARY FAMILY SERVICE IDEA • Invite a firefighter, EMT, police officer, or dispatcher to the next Rotary family gathering so the children can personally deliver the thank-you kits.

Gravestone Cleaning & Cemetery Care

SAMPLE ORGANIZATION	APPROPRIATE AGE RANGE	TIME REQUIRED
Local cemetery, historic cemetery, veterans cemetery, or cemetery preservation organization	Ages 5–18+ Younger children can use spray bottles; older children and teens can gently scrub approved stones under adult supervision.	2–3 hours

What Will Families Do?

Families work with a cemetery or preservation organization to gently clean selected gravestones and care for the surrounding grounds. D/2 Biological Solution can be used on approved stones to help remove biological growth such as algae, moss, lichen, and mildew. Younger children can have an important job spraying the stones while older children and adults use soft brushes to gently scrub. Families can also help with light grounds cleanup and document the condition of stones before and after the project.

Potential Supplies

For Cleaning	For Families	Water & Organization
D/2 Biological Solution	Work gloves	Many spray bottles
Soft natural or nylon brushes	Water bottles	Separate bottles for D/2 & plain water
Clean water	Sunscreen / hats	Reliable water source OR large water supply
Buckets	Closed-toe shoes	Extra containers for refilling
Low-pressure hand sprayers	Weather-appropriate clothing	Ground cloths / towels

POSSIBLE FUNDS NEEDED	SERVICE IMPACT
\$100–\$300 , depending on the number of stones and what the cemetery provides. Costs may include D/2, spray bottles, soft brushes, gloves, water containers, and refreshments.	Helps preserve local history and honor the people remembered in the cemetery. Cleaning can make inscriptions easier to read and helps families and historians better appreciate the stories represented there.

Important Preservation Rules

Get permission first. Only clean stones approved by the cemetery or property owner. Inspect each stone before cleaning. Do not clean stones that are cracked, unstable, flaking, or severely eroded—these may need a trained conservator. Use the gentlest method possible. Never use bleach, acids, wire brushes, household cleaners, or power washers. Follow the D/2 manufacturer's directions and use separate spray bottles for cleaning solution and plain water.

Why This Works for Families

This project has a job for everyone. Five-year-olds can enthusiastically spray while older children scrub, adults supervise, and everyone can see the transformation. It is hands-on, educational, and gives families a chance to learn about local history while caring for a place that belongs to the whole community.

ROTARY FAMILY SERVICE IDEA • Select a section of the cemetery and create a simple “before & after” record of the stones your family helped care for.

Park & Trail Cleanup

SAMPLE ORGANIZATION	APPROPRIATE AGE RANGE	TIME REQUIRED
Local parks department, nature preserve, trail organization, or neighborhood association	Ages 4–18 Younger children can collect litter with adult supervision; older kids can help with raking, light landscaping, and trail maintenance as approved by the organization.	1½–2 hours

What Will Families Do?

Families spend a morning helping keep a local park, trail, or natural area clean and welcoming. Tasks might include picking up litter, clearing small fallen branches, raking leaves, removing weeds or invasive plants when approved, cleaning picnic areas, and helping tidy trail entrances. Adults should supervise children closely and handle any sharp, hazardous, or heavy materials.

Potential Supplies

For Cleanup	For Families	For Safety
Trash bags	Work gloves in child & adult sizes	First-aid kit
Recycling bags / containers	Water bottles	Hand sanitizer
Litter grabbers	Sunscreen	Insect repellent
Rakes & lightweight hand tools	Hats / weather-appropriate clothing	Safety vests if working near roads
Buckets	Closed-toe shoes	Drinking water / refreshments

POSSIBLE FUNDS NEEDED	SERVICE IMPACT
\$0–\$150 , depending on what the organization provides. Possible expenses include gloves, trash bags, litter grabbers, water, refreshments, and replacement tools or supplies.	Makes a shared community space cleaner, safer, and more enjoyable for families, walkers, runners, and neighbors while teaching children to care for the places they share.

Why This Works for Families

This is an easy project for families to join together. Younger children can focus on finding litter while older kids and adults take on more involved tasks. It is active, outdoors, and gives everyone an immediate visual reminder of the difference their work made.

ROTARY FAMILY SERVICE IDEA • Choose a park or trail that families regularly use, then take a “before & after” photo to show the impact of the cleanup.

Food Pantry Helpers

SAMPLE ORGANIZATION	APPROPRIATE AGE RANGE	TIME REQUIRED
Local food pantry, food bank, or community meal program	Ages 4–18 Younger children can sort lightweight items and assemble bags; older kids can stock shelves, organize donations, and help prepare food boxes.	1½–2 hours

What Will Families Do?

Families spend a morning helping a local food pantry prepare food and household items for neighbors in need. Tasks might include sorting donated food, checking dates, organizing shelves, packing food boxes or bags, assembling family meal kits, and helping clean or organize the pantry. Children can take on age-appropriate jobs while adults supervise and handle heavier lifting.

Potential Supplies

For the Pantry	For Families	For Packing & Cleanup
Cardboard boxes or reusable bags	Work gloves	Packing tape
Shelving labels / markers	Water bottles	Paper bags
Food-safe storage containers	Closed-toe shoes	Trash & recycling bags
Scissors / box cutters (adult use)	Comfortable clothing	Hand sanitizer
Cleaning supplies approved by pantry	Optional child-size gloves	Permanent markers

POSSIBLE FUNDS NEEDED	SERVICE IMPACT
\$0–\$100 , depending on the pantry. Many organizations provide the supplies needed. Possible expenses include packing materials, cleaning supplies, or purchasing a small amount of food to fill gaps in pantry inventory.	Helps a local food pantry serve more families efficiently by organizing donations, preparing food packages, and keeping the pantry ready to meet community needs.

Why This Works for Families

This project gives children a chance to see how a food pantry works and how small jobs add up to a big community impact. Younger children can sort and pack while older kids can take on more responsibility. Families finish the project knowing they helped make it easier for neighbors to receive the food and support they need.

ROTARY FAMILY SERVICE IDEA • Ask the pantry what items are most needed before the project, then invite families to bring a small donation to add to the pantry shelves.

Garden Helpers: Community Garden Cleanup

SAMPLE ORGANIZATION	APPROPRIATE AGE RANGE	TIME REQUIRED
Local community garden, food pantry, or neighborhood garden	Ages 4–18 Younger children can pick up litter, plant, and water; older kids can weed, rake, mulch, and help with larger tasks.	1½–2 hours

What Will Families Do?

Families spend a Saturday morning helping prepare a community garden for the next growing season. Tasks might include pulling weeds, clearing garden beds, spreading mulch, cleaning tools, planting flowers or vegetables, and picking up litter. Kids can take on age-appropriate jobs while adults handle heavier tools and lifting.

Potential Supplies

For the Garden	For Families	For Cleanup
Gardening gloves	Work gloves in child & adult sizes	Trash bags
Hand trowels & small garden tools	Water bottles	Buckets
Rakes & shovels	Sunscreen	Brooms / dustpans
Mulch, compost, seeds or plants	Hats / weather-appropriate clothing	Recycling bags
Garden hose / watering cans	Closed-toe shoes	Hand sanitizer

POSSIBLE FUNDS NEEDED	SERVICE IMPACT
\$0–\$250 , depending on what the organization provides. Potential expenses include gloves, gardening tools, mulch, seeds/plants, trash bags, and refreshments.	Helps a community organization maintain a space that can provide food, beauty, education, and a gathering place for the neighborhood.

Why This Works for Families

Everyone can participate! Younger children have simple jobs, older children can take on more responsibility, and adults can provide supervision and help with heavier work. Most importantly, families can see the difference they made before they leave.

ROTARY FAMILY SERVICE IDEA • Take a quick “before & after” photo and share the results at the next Rotary lunch.