



Temple Shalom

300 East Putnam Ave, Greenwich, CT 06830

Telephone: 203-860-7191 • www.templesholom.com

Mitzvah Projects Resource Guide

Ideas for places to volunteer
or support in the spirit of
Tikkun Olam

updated March 2023

Dear B'nai Mitzvah Families:

While one becomes a Jewish adult simply by turning 13, there are many ways in which we mark this transition from childhood to the age of Mitzvah, which means commandments, opportunities and responsibilities. We mark the transition with a service and a celebration, but we also begin to contribute to the community and the world in a more robust way.

Participating in a Mitzvah Project is the beginning of a life-long Jewish commitment to *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world. We ask each student approaching their simcha to take on a mitzvah project. Projects can mean raising awareness; donating monies; volunteering on site; and/or organizing drives to benefit an organization or cause. We've compiled a brief directory of some suggested opportunities and organizations. You are of course welcome to choose something not on this list.

We hope this project will be just the beginning of a life-long commitment to helping others in the world around us. We want our students to use their talents and skills with which they have been blessed to make a positive difference in the world.

Mitzvah Projects should be completed or well underway by the date of your simcha. We want to hear about your project, what you've learned and who you've impacted during your D'var Torah speech.

Please let us know if you need any guidance or assistance. We are here to help you succeed in your first project as a Jewish adult.

B'shalom,

*Rabbi Mitch
and Rabbi Kevin*

To help choose a mitzvah project, ask yourself these questions:

What do I really like to do?

What am I really good at doing?

What bothers me about the world so much that I really want to change it?

*There is no such thing as a small mitzvah!
Any mitzvah, no matter how small,
changes the entire world.*

To see other ideas, things we can do every day and not specific to a particular organization, take a look at pages 15 - 16.

Before finalizing your Mitzvah Project, please fill out the *Mitzvah Project Declaration Google Form* (www.tinyurl.com/TSmitzvah)

You should declare a Mitzvah Project at least 8-9 months prior to your Simcha.

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Adopt-A-Dog

www.adopt-a-dog.org

Adopt-A-Dog is a limited admission animal shelter whose mission is to save, socialize and secure loving homes for unwanted or abandoned dogs. Youth volunteers are welcome. Projects include making shelter blankets, making dog treats and possibly volunteering at the Shelter. (Animals & Environment)

Alex's Lemonade Stand

alexslemonade.org

The mission of Alex's Lemonade Stand is to change the lives of children with cancer through funding impactful research, raising awareness, supporting families and empowering everyone to help cure childhood cancer. Set up your own lemonade stand to raise money for childhood cancers. (Health)

Areyvut

www.areyvut.org

A non-profit organization established in 2002, Areyvut offers a variety of unique and meaningful opportunities and programs to inspire Jewish youth to get involved in their communities in ways they never imagined, while also helping them to realize the immense power they have to make their communities and the world a better place. (Database)

Audubon Greenwich

www.greenwich.audubon.org

Greenwich Audubon Center's mission is to engage and educate people to conserve, restore, and enjoy nature. Volunteers help achieve this mission of environmental awareness and maintenance of a thriving and healthy environment for birds and wildlife. Contact Christian, Senior Director of Community Programs, at christian.alexander@audubon.org (Animals & Environment)

Backyard Sports

www.byardsports.com

The Backyard Sports Plus program offers special needs children, ages 5-15 a safe and appropriately competitive program to learn and enjoy team sports. Backyard Sports is looking for young athletes and student leaders to volunteer as peer mentors. Contact Danny at danny@byardsports.com (Special Needs)

Barbara's House (formerly Community Centers Greenwich)

www.barbarashousect.org

Barbara's House is a social service agency dedicated to building skills that empower clients to overcome educational, social and economic barriers so that they can reach their full potential. Opportunities include helping with homework, organizing a school supplies drive, or running a structured after school activity. Contact Vanessa at vcardinal@barbarashousect.org (Social Service Agency)

Ben's Bells

www.bensbells.org

Ben's Bells educates communities about the skills we need to make kindness a part of our everyday lives. While based in Arizona, Ben's Bells has a CT based office. Contact Cody, regional manager, at 203-051-9999 or cody@bensbells.org (At Risk Youth)

Call-A-Ride

www.callaridegreenwich.org

The organization provides free door-to-door transportation for Greenwich's ambulatory senior citizens, who lack other means of transportation. While drivers must be over the age of 25, providing rides could become a family project. (Elderly)

Cerebral Palsy

www.cpwestchester.org

Cerebral Palsy of Westchester relies on the support of the community to assist in providing quality services. Read to students; coach / teach sports; assist as special events; perform and more. Contact Joan Colangelo at 914-937-3800 ext 722. (Special Needs)

David's Closet at Stamford Hospital

www.stamfordhospitalfoundation.org

This special toy closet was originally set up by a Temple Sholom family who lost a child to leukemia in 2000. Any child admitted to the hospital receives a free toy from David's Closet. Volunteers help keep their shelves stocked. Contact Belinda at 203-276-2995 or bfoster@stamhealth.org (Health)

Domus

www.domuskids.org

Domus' goal is to help at risk youth get on a path toward health and opportunity so they can engage and succeed in school and ultimately have satisfying and productive lives. Volunteer your time or help run a collection drive for much needed supplies. (At Risk Youth)

Don Bosco Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry

www.donboscocenter.org

Since 1928, Don Bosco Center has served the needs of low-income immigrant youth and their families in the village of Port Chester. There are volunteer opportunities for weekday and Saturday morning shifts at the daily soup kitchen and food pantry. Food and clothing drives are always needed. (Poverty & Hunger)

Dorot Westchester

www.dorotusa.org

Volunteers can make a lasting impact on the lives of older adults. Forge new friendships through in-home visiting programs; telephone friends; holiday package deliveries; intergenerational chess and more. (Elderly)

Emunah Afulah

www.emunahafulah.org

A residential and afterschool therapeutic day care facility serving children at risk aged 5-18 in Afula, Israel (45 minute drive from Haifa). Twin your bar/bat mitzvah with one of Emunah Afulah's children, sponsor a child, donate funds or visit and spend time with the children on your next visit to Israel. (At Risk Youth) (Israel)

Experience Camps

www.experiencecamps.org

Experience Camps is a national network of summer camps for children and teens who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling or primary caregiver. Hands on volunteer opportunities for adults. Other opportunities include becoming an ambassador, raising awareness and helping to fundraise. (Health)

Ezra Avot

www.ezraavot.org

Ezrat Avot has been caring for Jerusalem's elderly for nearly thirty years. With poverty increasing, elders are among the hardest hit. Ezrat Avot prepares over 800 hot meals a week and distributes 200+ dry food parcels to families. Visit the senior citizen center on your visit to Israel and help cut vegetables and prepare a hot food meal which is then delivered to the elderly's homes. (Elderly)(Israel) (Poverty & Hunger)

Feeding Westchester

www.feedingwestchester.org

The goal of Feeding Westchester is to end hunger in Westchester County. They source and distribute food and other resources. Help by hosting a food drive; assembling holiday food bags and help with the mobile food pantry. Sign up for shifts online! (Poverty & Hunger)

Filling in the Blanks

www.fillingintheblanks.com

Filling in the Blanks fights childhood hunger by providing children in need meals on the weekends. Help run a food drive or volunteer at their warehouse packing bags. (Poverty & Hunger)

Friends of Karen

www.friendsofkaren.org

Friends of Karen supports critically ill children and their families. They will match your time and talents to programs, projects and needs that enable them to support families. Examples include being a part of gift wrapping and packing team during the holidays; putting together birthday bags; helping at a special event and more. (Health)

Greenwich Special Olympics

www.soct.org

Special Olympics provides year round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual or physical challenges. Our volunteers serve as partners, coaches and counselors to the athletes. By sharing in the athletic training, they are inspired by witnessing the courage and fortitude our athletes exhibit. (Special Needs)

HIAS

www.hias.org

Founded as the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, today HIAS works around the world to protect and assist refugees of all faiths and ethnicities who have been forced to flee their homelands. Locally, HIAS partners with Jewish Family Services of Greenwich to provide services such as food, clothing, career counseling, and more to refugees. (Immigration)

Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center

www.hhrecny.org

The Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center enhances the teaching and learning lessons of the Holocaust and the right of all people to be treated with dignity and respect. Opportunity to “Twin with a Survivor”, where b’nai mitzvah students meet three times with a survivor, getting to know them and becoming a keeper of their story. Contact Millie at mjasper@hhrecny.org or 914-696-0738 (Holocaust)

Hope in Motion

www.stamfordhospitalfoundation.org

Hope in Motion is an annual fundraising and awareness walk/run for a broad range of supportive services provided at no charge to patients of Stamford Health’s Bennett Cancer Center. Join the walk, join a team, or start a team & get friends and family to join with you. (Health)

Inspirica

www.inspircact.org

The mission of Inspirica is to break the cycle of homelessness by helping people achieve and maintain permanent housing and stability in their lives. Some ways to help include providing dinner to the women's shelter, babysitting while parents attend education classes, and running collection drives. Email Jillian at jduffy@inspiricaCT.org or call 203-388-0110. (Poverty and Hunger)

IRIS - Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services

www.irisct.org

Every year, approximately 500 come to Connecticut. IRIS addresses the critical needs and is the primary resource for helping refugees rebuild their lives locally. There are lots of ways to help ranging from holding drives to help secure key items such as furniture, clothing or even school supplies. Participate and help spread the word about World Refugee Day or, as a family, help co-sponsor a refugee family. (Immigration)

Jewish Family Services of Greenwich

www.jfsgreenwich.org

JFS offers lots of ways for teens, bar or bat mitzvah age and older, to get involved. Opportunities include Supermarketing for Seniors (page 14) and refugee resettlement (page).

Kids Helping Kids

www.kidshelpingkidsct.org

KHK's mission is to develop leadership skills through youth-led service projects. They empower students to use their passions to make a difference in the lives of other kids. KHK has hosted birthday parties for children living in homeless shelters. They have created a "Handled with Care" boutique to provide a dignified shopping experience. They have collected over 24,000 pairs of shoes. Sign up for a volunteer orientation online. (Volunteer Org)

Kids in Crisis

www.kidsincrisis.org

Kids in Crisis provides free, 24/7 help for Fairfield County children, teens and parents dealing with any type of crisis including abuse, neglect, family conflict, and more. Be a dinner hero and make a complete dinner for residents at Kids in Crisis, hold a collection drive for much needed supplies, or contact them for other ideas for ways to get involved. (At Risk Youth)

Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger

www.mazon.org

Mazon works to fight hunger for people of all faiths and backgrounds in the U.S. and in Israel. There are many meaningful ways to incorporate Mazon into your mitzvah project. Take a look at their guide to see what projects they're currently working on. (Poverty & Hunger) (Israel)

Meals-On-Wheels

www.mealsonwheelsofgreenwich.org

Meals on Wheels delivers nutritious meals to those in need. Meals are delivered Mon–Fri to each client's door by caring volunteers. Volunteer with a parent and help deliver meals throughout the Greenwich community. Contact Lynne Stewart at greenwichmow@optonline.net or 203-869-1312. (Elderly)

Midnight Run

www.midnightrun.org

Midnight Run volunteers distribute food, clothing, blankets, and personal care items to homeless people on the streets of New York City. Midnight Run needs donations in each of these categories. Organize a drive, volunteer to pack toiletry kits, sign up to make sandwiches. Temple Sholom holds several Midnight Runs a year, or sign up to go with another group online.

Mothers for Others

www.mothersforothers.org

Mothers for Others supports the well-being of low and limited income families by providing diapers for children from birth to three years old. It is the largest independent diaper bank in Fairfield County, and the only dedicated diaper bank serving the town of Greenwich. (Poverty & Hunger)

Neighbor to Neighbor

www.ntngreenwich.org

Greenwich's food and clothing pantry is housed at Christ Church. Volunteer opportunities include holding food and clothing drives; sorting food and clothing donations; stocking the shelves. Contact Duncan at dlawson@ntngreenwich.org or 203-622-9208 ext 12. (Poverty & Hunger)

Netanya Foundation

www.netanyafoundation.org

The Netanya Foundation was established in 1989 in order to improve the quality of life of the city's residents. They provide funding for school supplies, after school lunch programs and building renovations. In addition, the children that participate in this program learn all about teamwork, communication, goal setting and healthy life skills. (At Risk Youth)(Israel)

Project Sunshine

www.projectsunshine.org

Project Sunshine volunteers spread sunshine, restoring a crucial sense of normalcy to the pediatric health care environment. B'nai mitzvah volunteers participate in sending Sunshine projects, creating craft kits, surgi dolls and Sunny Grams to hospitalized children. Contact Greg at gfeigeles@projectsunshine.org. (Health)

River House Adult Day Care

www.theriverhouse.org

The River House welcomes volunteers of all ages to use their unique skills and talents to provide their clients with new experiences. Volunteers can help with arts and crafts, games, exercise, or come and perform. For more information, contact Donna at dspellman@theriverhouse.org or 203-622-0079 (Elderly)

Sharsheret

www.sharsheret.org

Sharsheret supports Jewish women and families facing breast and ovarian cancer – those who have been diagnosed and those who are at high risk. Volunteers have organized Shabbat awareness programs in their communities, hosted bake sales in support of Sharsheret, organized toy collections for Sharsheret's Busy Box program, coordinated Pink and Teal Challah Bakes and so much more. Sharsheret works with b'nai mitzvah students to determine a project that meets their needs and interests. Contact Yael at ygevertzman@gmail.com for ideas. (Health)

SPCA Westchester

www.spcawestchester.org

The SPCA is a no-kill, not-for-profit animal welfare organization dedicated to saving homeless, abused and abandoned animals and to protecting animals from cruelty and neglect through education and enforcement of humane laws. As a rising volunteer, you can help organize donation drives, animal enrichment, read to dogs, and journal with cats! (Animals & Nature)

Stamford Museum and Nature Center

www.stamfordmuseum.org

Dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of art and popular culture, the natural and agricultural sciences, and history. Volunteers will be asked to help perform tasks like set-up, festivals, break-down, and more. Volunteers' efforts play a crucial role in the success of their events. Contact Gigi, Community Engagement Manager, at glombardi@stamfordmuseum.org or 203-977-6530. (Animals & Environment)

Supermarketing for Seniors

www.jfsgreenwich.org

Jewish Family Services of Greenwich provides weekly shopping for seniors who can't make it to the supermarket. In addition to the shopping, volunteers usually spend time unloading groceries and visiting with the senior. This is a great opportunity for the whole family to get involved and requires only two hours a week. Contact Melissa at mbasilereolon@jfsgreewnich.org (Elderly)

Temple Sholom

www.templesholom.com

We have a number of mitzvah projects you can get involved in. Sponsor and deliver Shabbat Bags; participate in Midnight Run; Support our Toy Drive. Many other options available. Email rabbikevin@templesholom.com for more information or ideas.

Volunteer Match

www.volunteermatch.org

Volunteer Match is a national database of non profit volunteer opportunities. They have connected millions of people with a great place to volunteer and helped tens of thousands of organizations better leverage volunteers to create a real impact. Search engine includes opportunities by location, virtual opportunities, and type of organization. (Database)

World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust & Descendants

www.holocaustchild.org

To help remember the Jewish children who were murdered during the Holocaust, choose to twin with someone who did not survive to have a b'nai mitzvah.

Zichron Menachem

www.zichron.org

They provide support for any young person (under the age of 25) living with cancer in Israel, as well as their parents and siblings. (Health)

Other Mitzvah Ideas You Can Do Every Day

1. Send an anonymous donation to someone you know who is struggling financially.
2. Ask for forgiveness - Make a list of ways in which you have wronged others. Spend time asking forgiveness for your actions.
3. Call someone on their birthday. Facebook posts are great but personal outreach can make a bigger difference.
4. Bring gently used board games and decks of cards to a local homeless shelter.
5. Run a Bone Marrow drive in your community.
6. Go through your book shelves and collect books to donate to a local school; library; detention center or hospital. Ask friends to do the same.
7. Learn a card trick or two and then visit a senior center to entertain.
8. Return a shopping cart for someone at the grocery store.
9. Say thank you to cashiers and those packing your bags.
10. Go through your closets and fill 2 bags with clothing that you no longer wear. Donate these gently worn items.
11. Do the dishes without being asked
12. Donate blood.
13. Hold the door open for those who enter after you go through it.
14. Engage in conversation with one person who you would normally overlook.
15. Collect used eyeglasses and donate to an organization that recycles them for those unable to afford them.
16. Deliver flowers, pizza or cookies to your local police, fire, or ambulance station to thank our first responders.
17. Foster or adopt a shelter animal.
18. Write a handwritten letter to a grandparent or elderly friend. Share what is going on in your life and ask about theirs.
19. Check in with isolated seniors and offer to run errands for them to combat isolation. Teach them how to do video calls.
20. Learn how to knit and then donate blankets or scarves to people in need.
21. Shop at and support a small local business.
22. Shovel your neighbor's walkway or take out their garbage cans on garbage day.
23. Organize a neighborhood clean up day.

24. Let someone with fewer items than you go ahead of you at the supermarket.
25. Pay for the person's coffee in line behind you.
26. Offer to take someone's dog for a walk.
27. Collect pet food, toys or blankets for an animal shelter.
28. Plant a garden.
29. Send 5 postcards of gratitude to friends.
30. Take a moment to pray for those in need of healing.
31. Resist the urge to gossip.
32. Make sandwiches to give to a local shelter or soup kitchen.
33. Spread love and cheer in your neighborhood with sidewalk art.
34. Write thank you notes to doctors, nurses and other first responders.
35. Send a care package to deployed troops.
36. Collect coins in a tzedakah box. When full donate to a local charity.
37. Create and decorate a bird feeder.

Adapted from Areyvut.com list of resources