Ideas for Serving with Your Kids

We asked... you answered! Over 1400 Watermark people told us how they serve with their kids. Watermark's External Focus team compiled & edited 162 of 'em—"steal" one or be inspired to come up with your own.

Sharing Your Stuff (& Helping Others Share, Too)

Giving material resources can be a great way to start serving with your kids, especially when you also pursue more relational forms of serving!

- Peanut butter drive on our street 1.
- 2. Popsicle stand to raise money for a local school
- We had neighbors write on our sidewalk for every 5 3. names, we bought a backpack for a low-income school
- 4. We have each child pack a Christmas shoebox for a child their own age and gender
- Bringing flowers to an assisted living facility 5.
- Delivering cookies to neighbors 6.
- My boys and I intentionally bought items, filled Operation 7. Christmas Child shoeboxes, and prayed for the boys who would receive them
- Brought meals to couples with a newborn 8.
- 9. Hot chocolate stand after tornadoes hit a neighborhood
- 10. Our kids raised money to provide toys for the QuestCare Clinic, and we built a Lego table with the funds!
- 11. Serve the firefighters and police officers in our neighbor-

Serving thru Orgs

There are many fantastic non-profit organizations where families can serve. These include Watermark's Ministry Partners (found at watermark.org/impact) and other orgs that you find, "vet," and jump into.

- 23. I bring Samuel with me to serve at **Interfaith Family Services**
- 24. Provide needed items to kids through a foster care agency
- 25. Babysat at a women's shelter, and talked to some of the moms about our faith and taking their next steps
- 26. Buckner International
- 27. My sons have joined me at Cornerstone Crossroads Academy, where I lead "Breakfast & Bible" on Fridays
- 28. My wife and I attended a Compassion event in 2015 with our 5-year-old daughter Madeline and now sponsor a girl in Uganda who is close to her same age

- 29. Organizing the baby room at Thrive Women's Clinic
- 30. OurCalling
- 31. Christmas caroling at a retirement community
- 32. Our family participated in some of the 41. I served with a ministry for refugees ministries from the Give & Go list over the summer
- 33. Building homes in Costa Rica
- 34. Donated food and time at **Beautiful Feet** in Fort Worth
- 35. Served togeth-
- 36. Father-daughter date serving at the **Operation Christmas Child distribu**tion center
- 37. Feed my Starving Children
- 38. Reading program at a local apartment

hood by baking, writing notes, and taking treats

- 12. About twice per year we clean out our excess and donate it
- 13. Book drive to support Readers 2 Leaders
- 14. Back-to-school backpack drive for single parent families
- 15. Did a canned food drive and delivered to Brother Bill's, where we served for an afternoon
- 16. Our family packed resource bags to give the homeless, then distributed them to our neighbors for them to pass out
- 17. Our family decided to cut back on Christmas gifts so we could make a significant contribution. We researched and studied possibilities, and decided on donating to a spine doctor in Ethiopia to provide money for one spinal surgery
- 18. Pick up day-old bread on Sunday morning and take to a homeless organization
- 19. Cupcake stand to raise money to buy items for the Samaritan Inn
- 20. We held a garage sale at home, involved the community and neighbors, and then donated the proceeds to an orphans organization in El Salvador
- 21. Adopting a single-parent family for Christmas
- 22. Delivered Easter baskets to South Dallas
 - 39. Participate with my kids in a softball league, and we live out our faith at the team's social gatherings
 - 40. My kids and I served at a camp for people with brain injuries
 - weekly and took my 3 kids to help me serve in their preschool area

42. Took my daughter and Family Serve! : granddaughters to work in the community pantry. The children earned money, we went grocery shopping, we took our groceries to the pantry, and then they worked in the back

- organizing and shelving the items
- 43. Checking people in for clothing distribution to the homeless in Downtown
- 44. Regularly loving on families within Jesus Said Love

- Visit the "hub" for service ideas for you and your kids at watermark.org/familyserve

er at the North Texas Food Bank

- 45. Kids Beach Club in our local school
- 46. A service organization through our kids' school
- 47. Meals on Wheels
- 48. Cheering on the kids at Mercy Street sports leagues
- 49. Mike and I helped our high school son 60. My son and I started tutoring 5th start Fellowship of Christian Athletes at his school
- 50. Ministry trip to the Rio Grande Valley
- 51. My daughter Lillie and I are in a Christian neighborhood service group
- 52. Went to a retirement center and brought blankets we had made, and played bingo
- 53. Served bi-monthly at a school for kids with disabilities.
- 54. Started a dance camp at Mercy Street a few years ago, which we put on annually for the kids
- 55. We serve with our 16-year-old daughter at 2ndSaturday each month
- 56. We support a girl in Africa, praying for her and sending letters
- 57. My kids help out with Young Life Bible studies
- 58. My son and I packed backpacks for

the North Texas Food Bank, for chileat on the weekends

- 59. Our family serves at a family shelter for those who have faced abuse locally or in other countries
- grade boys on Thursday afternoons, through Forerunner Mentoring in Lake Highlands
- 61. Vickery Kids Club: providing snacks during their Bible study and Christmas gifts
- 62. Animal Shelter
- 63. Our kids made encouraging cards and door labels for the residents of a transitional house for homeless people
- 64. Readers 2 Leaders
- ran, and I served on the music team
- 66. RISD Academy turkey and coat drives
- 67. Served at a local Vacation Bible School
- 68. Passed out school supplies at Sigler Elementary in Plano during school registration
- 69. Served dinner to the kids Bible study

at Mercy Street in West Dallas

- dren who do not have enough food to 70. Connected with families who were at **Ronald McDonald House**
 - 71. Supporting a water wells project
 - 72. Helped with a volunteer dinner for Read2Win in Fort Worth
 - 73. Serving through Wee Volunteer
 - 74. Volunteering weekly at a school in the Como neighborhood
 - 75. We are involved in YoungLives, mentoring a teen mom from Lake Highlands High School. The kids have been involved with us in visiting her house, meeting siblings, taking food and gifts to her, and involving her in some of our holiday traditions
 - 76. We cleaned and made ready apartments for single moms
- 65. Pregnancy center's 5K run the boys 77. We mentor a boy from Mercy Street. We pick him up every weekend and he spends time with our entire family
 - 78. We participate in Walk for Life
 - 79. With ACT in West Dallas by picking up trash, praying over the community, and sharing Christ with residents
 - 80. Younglife Capernaum (the special needs ministry)

Help Service "Stick" with Your Kids

Don't simply "do service" — disciple your kids to become people who serve! How can you make service projects "stick"?

1. By Learning: Teach your kids facts and principles about how you're serving (bring in scriptural themes, help them understand the larger related issues, etc.)

2. Through Relationships: It's great when we can connect relationally with those we serve. So when possible, visit them in-person, or at least help your child "get to know them" by sharing stories, showing pictures, and providing context.

3. By Repetition: Variety can be great for kids. But you can also go deeper by repeating an activity, serving along the same "theme," or serving the same people in multiple ways.

4. By Reminder: Review what you've done right after you serve, but don't stop talking about it! Whether you use pictures or other reminders, spend time reviewing ways your kiddo has been learning about service.

Right Where You Live

It's fantastic to teach kids to look around for chances to serve nearby - right where God has placed them at home and school! (Also see our "98 Ideas for Serving in Your Neighborhood" at watermark.org/go.)

- 81. I try to show my family that you don't have to go far and away to find people who could use our help and our skills. Even just working on cars, houses, cleaning up, or giving people rides because of lack of transportation
- 82. Loved on our Kroger employees at Christmas
- 83. Helped clean up at White Rock Lake
- 84. We passed out tracts and wrote notes of encouragement and truth for our neighbors before Christmas
- 85. Help neighbors with yardwork
- 86. Pet-sitting for neighbors
- 87. Built a wheelchair ramp for a neighbor
- 88. Last year, my daughter and I participated in an annual service day at a local elementary school
- 89. There was a family in our kids' school that fell on hard times and had tremendous needs. We talked with our children about how we could help supply those needs, and our chil-

(Continued next page...)

dren were a very big part of every step we took to help

- 90. Created a lemonade stand and gave out Bible verses and lemonade to our neighborhood
- 91. Connected with foreign exchange students
- 92. Christmas caroled for neighbors who had rough years
- 93. Concerted effort to visit 2 of our elderly neighbors and offer them authentic friendship, love, and service. We bring our kids with us so they can see what it means to serve
- 94. We take care of an elderly neighbor's yard, and my kids water their assortment of bonsai trees –
 a massive job because their yard is full of them
 Want to serve wi
- 95. My children and I went door-to-door to each neighbor, bringing small gift box with invitations to church. We also put their newspapers on their doorsteps
- 96. We started doing small acts of service in our community when our son was 18 months old. We leave artwork with Scripture on our trash can for the waste valet, leave a sign ("Need a Church Home? Come See") with tear-offs of Watermark's address at our mailbox area, took cookies to neighbors when we moved in and during holidays...
- 97. Our kids served with us cleaning our HOA park/pool area
- 98. When our neighbor spent time in the ICU, we took all his Christmas lights down for him and babysat his grandbaby so his wife could sit at the hospital with him
- 99. Picked up trash in the neighborhood with my son
- 100.Served with friends who run the Apartment Life CARES ministry at their apartment complex
- 101.We moved to a new home last year, and we have intentionally gone door-to-door to meet our new neighbors and gotten involved in some of the local events

102. Checked mail for neighbors

- 103.We have a large number of refugees that go to our elementary school. Several families at our school have cleaned at their apartment complex and reading camps. We also just give them rides to functions at the school. They are friends with our kiddos and a great chance to love our neighbors
- 104.Pray for our kids' teachers and classmates consistently 105.We bring two neighborhood boys to church every week 106.Write encouraging letters to neighbors and make sweet

Hands & Feet Projects

Want to serve with your kids (as young as 2), with other parents or on your own? Learn about Hands & Feet Projects at <u>watermark.org/familyserve</u>

107.Served in our neighborhood by helping people move 108.We live in a largely Muslim neighborhood. As a family we work to be kind, bring

treats just because

- snacks to the park, bring chalk for the new kids. It's certainly not a lot, but with these particular families, its an easy opening to build relationships and build trust so that we can have a discussion about Jesus
- 109.Open our home (and yard) to neighbors, engaging with them and talking about what matters most to our lives
- 110. We have an "open door policy" for the neighborhood kids and foster relationships with them
- 111.Serve in our neighborhood not in an "organized" way but just intentionally trying to meet needs of those around us. We always involve the kids!
- 112. We serve through my position as block captain. Kids help with this
- 113.We babysat every month for neighborhood kiddos so husbands and wives could have some couple time
- 114.We organized boys in our son's small group to rotate lawn care, for a neighbor who was fighting breast cancer

Serving thru WM

Of course, you can serve with your kids in Watermark ministries, too. Here are a few of the many ways your fellow Watermarkers bring their kids along to serve!

- 115.Brought my daughter to serve at Glow
- 116. Haiti Family Trip
- 117. Hands and Feet Projects
- 118. Hugs & Quiches
- 119. Served during Christmas Eve service
- 120.My young son and daughter assist sometimes when I serve on the Parking Team
- 121.My child is only 18 months old, but we try to bring her along when I'm

- serving at church
- 122. My daughter and I serve lunches on Frontlines team
- 123.My daughter greets with me 1st Sundays
- 124.My daughter and I both serve as rovers in the Children's Ministry
- 125.My entire family serves with Kaleidoscope and rEcess
- 126.My kids have helped many times this year with curriculum preparation for the Children's Ministry
- 127.My foster child served in Starting Blocks with me for her first church experience
- 128. Our son Monte goes with us to coffee

crew, and he loves it

- 129.Our two oldest serve with us at Re | engage leaders meeting. They also serve by loving and encouraging the children around them while parents are at Re | engage
- 130.Served at Dallas Experience with my kids
- 131.Served together at Watermark Baptism Day
- 132.Served in the Nest with my daughter
- 133.We cooked a meal for Griefshare/ Shift families.
- 134.Zoe helped with ushering

Hosting Hospitably

Some families even take the step of building relationships through hosting. (You can find our guide for building a great get-together at <u>watermark.org/qo</u>.)

- 135.Served our neighborhood with a family BBQ get-together
- 136.Hosted a cookie-decorating party for families in our community and read *The Crippled Lamb* by Max Lucado
- 137.Our family hosted a weekly dinner

and Bible study for the junior high football team. Our son led some of the Bible study sessions for his teammates

- 138. Dinner invitations to our house for the holidays
- 139.Hosted a Halloween get-together for the neighborhood
- 140.Planned a neighborhood Easter Egg Hunt
- 141. Invited neighbors to the Christmas

play that we host at our house. The kids perform the play.

- 142.Backyard Bible club with our neighbors and kids
- 143.Block party in my neighborhood for National Night Out
- 144.Put on theme nights for our neighborhood as a way to draw people in.We've had "dive-in" movies, bounce houses, etc.

Spectacular Serving Stories

Some stories didn't fit a category but were too inspiring to pass up. Here are a handful of those kinds of service opportunities. (And we'd love to hear yours! Just email <u>externalfocus@watermark.org.</u>)

- 145.My kids were there when we were approached by someone in need of a meal, fed that person, and talked with and prayed for them
- 146.My children sometimes help at the English class I lead for international students at a local college
- 147.Ran a running club for children and young adults who are on the Autism spectrum
- 148. Helped a friend that we met at Raise the Mark bring his family from Ghana and apply for citizenship and green cards
- 149.We are moving our family to the Bonton neighborhood to become "urban missionaries"!
- 150.We are serving with our kids by bringing two foster babies into our home and loving their socks off!
- 151. My son and I will gather the grocery store carts that have been taken by customers in route to their apartments. We go throughout our area and roll the carts back to the local store so the store workers don't have to. My son loves it when the clerks offer us a discount for our deed, but he politely declines with, "God gave us a gift, I just wanted to give you a gift too."
- 152. We remolded and furnished one of our apartment units to serve and bless families who have a child or loved one in the hospital. Out whole family was and is part of the process of sharing Christ's love and reaching out to these families.
- 153. My family started and maintains a community garden. We have quarterly work days, where we maintain the garden but also look for opportunities to minister to the people with a wide variety of lifestyles and worldviews who come
- 154. My kids and I help parents, kids, and others in our public school and community who are struggling with issues related to special needs and learning disabilities. We share our own experiences, spend time with families who are looking for resources, and point them to help and support

- 155.My son and I gave an elderly man we didn't know a ride home from an auto shop one evening. I told him about Watermark and how God had changed my life.
- 156.Our family serves families and nurses in the NICU. We bring healthy snacks, an encouraging note with our photo, and our physical presence to sit with families in the waiting room each week. We get to know them. We follow up with texts and calls. We have shared car seats, preemie clothes, tears, and prayers
- 157.During Advent we took our kids to the Dollar Store and hid money throughout along with envelopes that said "It's better to give than to receive." The kids LOVED it!
- 158. Our favorite service experience was going out of town to work on a friend's house who was hospitalized. We cleaned out her garden, chopped firewood, prepared meals, etc.
- 159.Tutored in reading and writing with Burmese children at the Newport Landing apartments
- 160.Share Jesus with our pen pal family in Norway
- 161.We recently started a relationship with a Muslim family. We have taught our daughter the differences of religion and showed her how wonderful it is that we can love this family, welcome them into our community, and share Jesus with them despite our differences and communication barriers
- 162. The kids and I serve at our crossing guard's church once a month in the summer, giving out food to the very poor. It is really cool that we know our crossing guard's family, pastor, and the people they serve

Thank you for discipling the next generation to serve!

If you have any questions or want tips on serving, the Watermark External Focus team is glad to "coach" you! Just get in touch: <u>externalfocus@watermark.org</u>.