



**FAMILY VOLUNTEERING
OPPORTUNITIES
IN CHICAGOLAND**

As parents, the best gifts we can give to our children don't come in boxes. They are important life lessons that carry on through adulthood. Volunteering is a great, hands-on way to teach children about gratitude, compassion and empathy at an early age.

Chicagoland is full of unique organizations with family volunteer programs that provide fun, meaningful ways to give back to those in need. Whether it's making toys for shelter dogs, sorting canned goods in a food pantry, spending time with a local elder or cleaning up your family's favorite park, there are plenty of tangible opportunities to make a direct, immediate impact. Plus, volunteering teaches kids to count their own blessings, and to be more appreciative of the "luxuries" they don't realize they have such as a family, clothing, a warm bed, and access to food and education.

A

Anti-Cruelty Society

169 W. Grand Ave., Chicago
(312) 644-8338
anticruelty.org
Best for ages: 2-10

Introduce your kids to basic pet care and how to safely care for animals by volunteering at the Anti-Cruelty Society's Kids Who Care program, held the first Saturday of every month.

Children and their families can assist in various capacities of the shelter, with roles ranging from making a toy for a dog and reading a book to a cat, to preparing snacks for rabbits and guinea pigs, and decorating and distributing adoption flyers in the community.



ARK Chicago

6450 N. California Ave.,
Chicago
(773) 973-1000
arkchicago.org
Best for ages: 0-13

The ARK provides food, shelter, clothing, medical services and other types of assistance to members of the Chicagoland



Jewish community who are in distress. Once a month, the ARK opens its doors to families who want to help work in the pantry by shelving food, checking expiration dates and bagging fruit. Children ages 10 and older may also serve food to clients. ARK staff also make it a point to blend the hands-on work with a learning opportunity that focuses on Jewish values in helping others.

B

Bernie's Book Bank

917 N. Shore Drive, Chicago
(847) 780-7323
berniesbookbank.org
Best for ages: All

Reading to children at an early age supports literacy growth throughout their primary years, making it the most important skill a child can learn. However, two out of three low-income children have no access to books. Bernie's Book

Bank is changing that by sourcing and distributing quality children's books to at-risk Chicagoland children, providing each child with 12 books

a year from birth to sixth grade. Bernie's Book Bank welcomes volunteers of all ages and abilities to sort books by grade level, sticker and pack children's books six days a week in their warehouse. Although not necessary, prior to arriving for a volunteer shift, children and their parents can go through bookshelves at home to find new and gently used children's books that they would like to donate.

C

Cradles to Crayons

4141 W. George St., Chicago
cradlestocrayons.org/
chicago
(312) 767-1008

Best for ages: 5 and up

Cradles to Crayons provides children from birth to age 12 who live in homeless or low-income situations with the essential items they need to thrive at home, at school and at play. A key component of C2C's mission is that everything given to the children and families must be in new or like-new condition. That's where volunteers come in, working in the Giving Factory warehouse, where they examine, sort and pack donated items – also called "KidPacks" – for distribution. These items range from clothing and shoes to toys, books and school supplies.

Common Pantry

3744 N. Damen Ave.,
Chicago
(773) 327-0553
commonpantry.org
Best for ages: 8-12

Common Pantry has been providing emergency food to neighbors on the north side of Chicago for more than 50 years. Through its Common Kids volunteer program, the organization offers a variety of ongoing opportunities to help. Once a month, kids and their families can bag and deliver groceries to elderly clients. They can also take part in Wednesday re-stocking, a great "schools out" activity to help prepare the pantry for next-day distributions.

D

DuPage PADS

601 W. Liberty Drive,
Wheaton
(630) 682-3846
dupagepads.org
Best for ages: 12-17
The solution to end



homelessness is more complex than providing individuals with food and shelter. Founded in 1985, DuPage Pads is the largest provider of interim and permanent housing, coupled with support services to help individuals work toward becoming self-sufficient.

Families can volunteer at overnight housing sites during breakfast and dinner shifts to assist with preparing buffet-style meals, ensuring 35 to 40 guests are well fed, and cleaning up after food service. They can also help set up the sleeping area by laying down pads, pillows, blankets and sheets.



F

Feed My Starving Children

Multiple locations in Aurora, Libertyville and Schaumburg
(847) 519-9614
fmssc.org

Best for ages: 5 and up
Feed My Starving Children is a national nonprofit organization that works to eliminate hunger one child at a time. The premise is simple: volunteers come to one of the three Chicagoland locations to fill what they call manna packs, meal packs that restore malnourished individuals to full health. Manna packs contain soy, rice, dried vegetables and powdered vitamins. During packing sessions, volunteers are split up into groups where each person has a different job in the assembly line (pouring ingredients, weighing bags, sealing bags, packing boxes, etc.). Each bag, which is donated to food partners around the world, provides six meals for a child.

Fill a Heart 4 Kids

400 E. Illinois Road, Lake Forest
(847) 867-1000
fillaheart4kids.org
Best for ages: All
What would the world look



Greater Chicago Food Depository

like if every child was loved and remembered? That's the mission of Fill a Heart 4 Kids – to help local orphans and foster children who have been terribly abused to feel loved and remembered on special occasions like birthdays and holidays. On select days, families can get together to turn donated community items into "We Care" packages that they help pack and deliver. Every package includes a handwritten note that reminds kids that they're valuable and that people care about them.

G

Greater Chicago Food Depository

4100 W. Ann Lurie Place,
Chicago
(773) 247-3663
chicagosfoodbank.org
Best for ages: 5-13

One in six residents of our community goes hungry every day. Join the fight to end hunger on one Saturday each month during a Kids Day Repack program. There, volunteers check expiration dates, sort produce, label canned goods and repack bulk dry goods (cereal,

pasta, rice) into individual and family size portions. At the end of the session, volunteers review how many pounds of food everyone packaged up before they are distributed to a network of 700 pantries, soup kitchens and shelters in the community.

H

Horsefeathers Therapeutic Riding

1181 Riverwoods Road,
Lake Forest
(847) 234-2411
horsefeatherscenter.org
Best for ages: 5 and up
Horsefeathers is a sup-

portive treatment program that uses horses and ponies to improve the lives of children and adults with physical or mental/emotional disabilities. Saturdays and Sundays are the busiest days for the organization, and volunteers participate in all facets of the program and get to experience the joy of seeing riders progress week to week. Some areas that volunteers can lend a hand are with barn chores, horse care duties, grooming and tacking up.

L

Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly

355 N. Ashland Ave.,
Chicago
(312) 455-1000
littlebrotherschicago.org
Best for ages: All

The holidays often remind us about the importance of family, but thousands of older Chicagoans no longer have relatives to spend time with. Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly is committed to meeting the needs of these elders who are isolated and alone. Their Family Visiting Program matches families with a local elder for companionship. They



Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly

can deliver food bags, holiday gifts, and special meals to celebrate holidays and birthdays, go on an outing for a family-centered experience or simply spend quality time together.

P

PAWS Chicago

1997 N. Clybourn Ave.,
Chicago
(773) 935-7297
pawschicago.org
Best for ages: 12-17

Hundreds of families help homeless pets each year through the PAWS Chicago Family Services Program. Held at the Lincoln Park Adoption Center, North Shore Adoption Center and the Medical Center, families can visit with cats and dogs to give them much-needed attention and affection. They can pet, play and read to them, in addition to helping to get the facilities prepped, stocked, cleaned and ready to open to potential adopters who will give these animals loving homes.



Phil's Friends

1350 Lake St., Roselle
(224) 653-8315
philfriends.org
Best for ages: 8 and up

Phil Zielke knows that a cancer diagnosis can leave a person feeling hopeless, alone, scared and helpless. That's why the cancer survivor started Phil's Friends, a nonprofit organization that sends care packages to men, women and children of any age who are battling cancer. Care packages come in different varieties, depending



on the recipient. Each one is filled with items that are practical, comforting and entertaining. Families can gather in the organization's Hope Center to assemble and pack care packages, design and color cards, and more. Each month, hundreds of these care packages are shipped across the nation to patients whose loved ones have requested a package for them.

Playitforward Kids

Multiple locations in Arlington Heights and Wheaton
(773) 480-6200
playitforwardkids.org
Best for ages: 2-16

Be the change you want to see in the world is forward Kids' motto. The grassroots organization offers monthly service-oriented events that show families how easy it is to have fun and be kind. Projects range from packing lunches for the homeless and painting pumpkins with seniors in a nursing home to creating toys for sheltered animals and raking leaves for neighbors.

R

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Chicagoland & Northwest Indiana

Multiple locations in Chicagoland (all in close proximity to hospitals)
rmhcni.org
Best for ages: 5 and up

There is nothing better than coming home to the smell of fresh baked cookies. But for 200 families in Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana, Ronald McDonald Charities is their home away from home every night, offering them care, resources and a place to stay near a hospital where their loved ones are receiving care. Families can make their days brighter by volunteering for the popular Meals from the Heart and Cookies of the Heart programs, where they can make and provide home-cooked meals and fresh baked cookies to Ronald McDonald House guests during their stay.

S

Share Your Soles

11201 S. Cottage Grove Ave.,
Chicago
(708) 448-4469
shareyoursoles.org
Best for ages: 11 and up
Share Your Soles collects

gently worn/ new shoes and distributes them to those in the greatest of need around the world. The organization, which is 90 percent funded and run by volunteers, offers opportunities to lend a hand on Thursdays and Saturdays for groups of 10 or more, making it a great extended family event. Volunteers can assist in the donation processing center, where they can sanitize, sort, polish, box and label shoes in preparation for weekly shipments to 40 impoverished nations. These items increase the mobility, safety and health of the recipients, providing them with hope for the future.

Share Our Spare

935 W. Chestnut St., Chicago
 shareourspare.org
 (312) 877-5884
 Best for ages: 6 and up

Share our Spare provides cost-free essentials for the early years by collecting new and gently-used infant and toddler items from families with extra to “spare” and distributes them to local families in need. Volunteers play a critical role in the “Sharehouse” warehouse, as they sort donations and assemble clothing bundles for families living below the federal poverty level in Chicago.



T

**The Forest Preserve
 District of Cook County**
 6100 N. Central Ave.,
 Chicago



The Honeycomb Project

(773)-631-1790
 fpdcc.com
 Best for ages: All

The Forest Preserves of Cook County are home to nearly 70,000 acres of diverse habitats, miles and miles of trails and waterways, hundreds of groves, and so much more.

Between April and November, families can participate in eight organized Adopt-a-Site Litter Cleanups, where they can visit their favorite Forest Preserve location to remove litter, participate in restoration activities, and meet with local ecologists. These cleanup events offer a dual opportunity to both enjoy and help nature.

The Honeycomb Project
 1658 N. Milwaukee Ave.,
 Chicago

(773)-750-7120
 thehoneycombproject.org
 Best for ages: 5-13

Often, family volunteering opportunities at local organizations fill up quickly. The Honeycomb Project is an additional outlet to find these opportunities, as they work with more than 45 organizations to source and organize monthly family volunteering events, bringing the tools, staff and resources needed to make volunteering easy for the participants and nonprofit partners. Many of the projects help at-risk, homeless and low-income individuals and families. Examples of projects include building bookcases for schools, cleaning up the city’s beaches and making sleeping mats for people experiencing homelessness. Donations are accepted from families to cover the cost of planning. Since its inception in 2011, more than 10,000 youth and their families have participated in Honeycomb programs impacting 1.5 million Chicagoans.