

U.S. Hogs For Dogs, Inc.

Sample Lesson Plans For Educators

Lesson 5 – The Benefits of Charity

Introduction

Webster’s Dictionary defines *charity* as “kindness or help for the needy or suffering.” Helping children learn about practicing the art of “kindness” is an important goal for all of us. When talking with children about how Assistance Dogs help people with disabilities, we often say that the dogs work with people who need a little extra help. Charity, giving assistance to those who need “a little extra help” is something we can practice no matter what our age. Even very young children can be shown that helping others is what we do as part of our humanity. It has been documented that even young toddlers will offer a toy or blanket to a crying peer.

There is a growth nationwide in programs in schools that introduce students to the art of caring about others. Schools collect canned goods in the fall to help families who may run short of food in the winter months. In colder climates, youngsters – with the help of their teachers – set up “mitten trees” to collect mittens and gloves for children who need them to play outside. Youth groups at churches, youth programs such as scouts or 4-H conduct service projects to benefit others in their community, such as cleaning up parks, putting on concerts at retirement homes, or collecting supplies for local animal shelters. Many high schools are instituting a community service requirement for graduation.

What reasons do we give children for doing these things? Discuss with your students the following ideas:

- We help others because it is the “right” thing to do. Discuss how we feel when we do something nice for someone else – perhaps especially for someone needing extra help at that time. Introduce the idea of “altruism” – being concerned for the welfare of others.
- There are government organizations which provide help some of the time (for example, the National Guard, early childhood programs like Head Start, and programs such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) which provide nutritional help). However, the government can’t do it alone. It needs its citizens, even its younger ones, to help others, too.
- Helping others in our communities makes our communities stronger. Cleaning up a park, shoveling a neighbor’s sidewalk when it fills with snow, or volunteering at a local animal shelter helps each of us get to know our community better – what it needs and what it has to offer all of us. These acts of kindness also help us get to know the people in our community better.
- We all may need help at some time in our lives. Helping others is like investing in your own future. Discuss with students the ideas of “pay it forward” (help others and then ask them to help someone else instead of paying you back) and “what

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goes around comes around” (doing something for someone else often results in someone doing something nice for you).

Activities

1. Have children share ways that they and their families help others. Give them some examples to get them started, discussing what they might have done for people they know, people they don't know, things they may have done through their school, church, community group, etc. Younger children may want to draw pictures to show things they have done for others. This often makes a good writing assignment for quiet work that can be shared with class later.

2. Consider adopting a special community project as an example of charity for your students. For example:

- A bake sale to help local children's services
- A penny collection to support local animal shelters
- Reading for pledges program to support Assistance Dog organizations (see elsewhere on this website)

A very useful book for more ideas to get your students thinking about how to help others and their communities is *The Kid's Guide to Service Projects: Over 500 Service Ideas for Young People Who Want to Make a Difference*, by Barbara A. Lewis (1995). From making "I Care" kits for homeless people to making new kid survival kits for kids in their own schools, this book will help students find a project they can work at to "make a difference."

Note: U.S. Hogs For Dogs, Inc. provides sample lesson plans as generic outlines for activities and topics of discussion within the classroom. Not all activities or topics may be suitable for all ages. The appropriateness and suitability of these lessons are left to the educator's professional discretion.