

THE JUF TOV VOLUNTEER NETWORK'S COMPREHENSIVE B'NAI MITZVAH TIKKUN OLAM GUIDE



MAKING MITZVOT PART OF YOUR BAR OR BAT MITZVAH



JUF TOV Volunteer Network
30 South Wells Street
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For assistance in planning your b'nai mitzvah projects contact the JUF TOV Volunteer Network. Call the TOV hotline at (312) 356-4762 or email tov@juf.org.



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THE FIRST STEPS:

Why should I add mitzvot to my b'nai mitzvah?

Our sages tell us the world rests on three pillars. One of them - the most important, many of them say - is Gemilut Chasidim (גמילות חסדים), acts of kindness, such as feeding the poor, visiting the sick, helping the needy and countless other mitzvot (מצוות). Though commonly referred to as good deeds, mitzvot are actually commandments. Jews are obligated to perform 613 mitzvot, which include following the Torah and performing good deeds as often as possible.

By following the commandments, Jews have an obligation to perform acts of charity and righteousness that make the world whole. Performing acts of kindness not only helps to make this a better world for you and for those whose lives you touch, but it also fulfills the mitzvah of tikkun olam (תיקון עולם), the reparation of the world.

B'nai mitzvah is a special time when you are first recognized as an adult in the Jewish community. By incorporating mitzvot into your b'nai mitzvah, you can take this occasion to set a positive example for others and start on a path towards leading a responsible, conscientious Jewish life.

Questions to consider when finding the right b'nai mitzvah project for you

Ask yourself these questions to help guide your tikkun olam path:

1. What interests me? What do I like to do?
2. How can I change the world in which I live?
3. Who do I want to help?
4. What can I do to help?
5. Do I want to do something on my own or involve my friends, family and/or guests?
6. In what area of my celebration do I want to incorporate tikkun olam?
7. If I choose a project that requires a financial commitment, how much money will I need to fundraise or donate?





MITZVOT BY MAIL

Save-the-Date

- If you are sending a save-the-date, include information about your project or the agency you are supporting.
- If you send an online save-the-date, include a link to the agency.
- Send tzedakah boxes as save-the-dates so that people can start saving up to support an agency of your choice. Include information about the agency with your request.

The Invitation

- Consider sending an invitation made by a social service agency. The invite informs people about the agency and a percentage of the cost of the invite goes to the organization.
- Tell your guests about your agency of choice in your invitation. Include a brochure, explain why that agency is important to you and why you want to help by volunteering and/or donating part of your b'nai mitzvah gift money to that agency.
- In the invitation, ask people to bring clothes, canned food, books, loose change, baby items, etc., to the celebration or service, which will be donated to an agency. Include information about the agency with your request.
- Include an envelope addressed to your favorite organization in the invitation. Explain why that agency is important to you. Tell your guests they can send a contribution to that organization instead of or to supplement giving a gift to you.





EDUCATE YOUR GUESTS

During your b'nai mitzvah service and/or during your celebration, you will have the opportunity to address your guests. Take this opportunity to explain your mitzvah project to them. Consider incorporating your message into your d'var torah. Tell your guests about your volunteer experiences and the agency to which you devote time or will be donating money or items. Explain why the cause you chose is important to you and how they too can get involved. Inspire them to make a difference in the world.

JUMPSTART YOUR B'NAI MITZVAH PROJECTS BY....

- Plan a trip or tour with some of your friends from synagogue and religious school to the agency of your choice. Include your friends in your b'nai mitzvah project and give them a chance to get involved.
- Visit an agency multiple times so you can get a clearer idea of how your project can better help an organization.
- Organize a program in your synagogue so that each bar/bat mitzvah will receive a tzedakah box reminding him or her to continue giving tzedakah after they complete religious school.
- Organize a collection drive leading up to your ceremony. You can announce the results during your d'var torah or your speech at your reception.



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B'NAI MITZVAH VOLUNTEER AND COLLECTION DRIVE IDEAS

Category	Hands-On Opportunities	Collection Drive Ideas
Lower-income or homeless families and individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver meals • Serve food to the hungry, ill or elderly • Make bag lunches to donate to a shelter or soup kitchen • Cook meals for a shelter • Sort food at a food pantry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate winter coats, mittens, scarves, and other clothing • Donate transit cards, baby supplies, first aid kits, luggage, toiletries or other needed items • Collect food
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with kids at camp or day care center • Fulfill a sick child's wishes • Volunteer as a camp counselor at a local summer camp with pre-school age children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect toys, games, summer camp or school supplies
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise money to support an organization that promotes literacy • Ask your principal if there are any ways you can volunteer at your school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate gently used or new children's books to schools, libraries or children's programs • Collect school supplies
The Elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the elderly in a nursing home; entertain them by playing an instrument, singing, reading a book, playing games, doing craft projects or just being cheerful and friendly – some facilities will even let you visit with your pets! • Aid staff during meals and other programs at a nursing home • Make cards that can be included with home delivered meal packages • Make no-sew fleece blankets for seniors to use as lap warmers or knit scarves to donate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decorate and donate picture frames • Donate yarn, bingo prizes or puzzles



Category	Hands-on Opportunities	Collection Drive Ideas
People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange a friendly visit to a special-needs facility • Raise money to support organizations that help people with disabilities • Partner with a special needs child and play buddy baseball or another sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and record readings of children's or adult books, short stories or poems to give to those with learning or visual disabilities
People with Illnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit a hospital: read to the patients, play an instrument or sing, perform a play or dance, distribute magazines or just keep them company • Cook a meal for an ailing friend or their family • Organize a blood and/or bone marrow drive • Grow your hair long and donate it to make wigs for patients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate unopened medicine • Decorate and donate blank puzzles to entertain patients • Donate magazines and activity books for medical facility waiting rooms • Make blankets for ill children • Collect new toys and games for hospitalized children
The Environment/Outdoor Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant trees and flowers • Help with cleanup and preservation of forest preserves and other natural sites • Help maintain local gardens, greenhouses and conservatories • Clean a park, a beach, or a playground • Paint a building or a fence • Start a recycling program at your synagogue or school • Educate your friends and family about an environmental issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and recycle used batteries, old computer parts and/or cell phones



Category	Hands-on Opportunities	Collection Drive Ideas
The Jewish community in Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver food packages on the Jewish holidays • Raise money for the JUF annual campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give menorahs and candles to needy Jewish families before Chanukah • Donate kosher food products
Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer your time to play sports with kids in organized settings • Sponsor a needy child's participation on a sports team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate sports equipment to facilities, camps, youth groups, and schools
Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make useful crafts and donate them to needy agencies • Create a fun art project for your friends and family and donate your creation to an organization • Paint a mural at an agency or school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and donate art supplies
Animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer at an animal shelter • Raise money for animal-rights organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize a pet food/supplies drive for an animal shelter
Israel, as well as aid to other Jewish communities abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise money to support programs for Jews around the world • Visit Israel on a JUF mission (subsidies are available for eligible b'nai mitzvah students) 	



USE YOUR CELEBRATION TO CHANGE THE WORLD

- Turn your bar/bat mitzvah celebration into something that reflects your service to the community. If you have centerpieces, decorations, party favors or a theme, they can reflect the cause that you are serving.
- Make centerpieces out of items that can later be donated, such as books, canned food, toys, and flowers.
- If you are donating money or items to an agency in honor of your b'nai mitzvah, use that agency's marketing materials to make "tzedakah" centerpieces. This will educate guests about the agency.
- Host a mitzvah fair, where each table represents a different agency with information about that agency.
- Inform your guests about the kinds of mitzvot and volunteer work you are doing by distributing a description of your projects or talking about them in your speech.
- Get your guests involved in tikkun olam during the celebration. Plan your celebration activities around volunteering and/or helping others. Plant trees, assemble care packages, create an art project and make crafts you can donate.
- Ask each guest to bring an item to donate to the celebration, such as a book or a toy. Make sure to explain where the items are being given.
- Place tzedakah boxes at each table or create large ones to use as centerpieces with explanations of where the money is being donated.
- Your party favors can be a mitzvah unto themselves. Hand out products made by non-profit organizations. Plant trees in Israel or make donations in honor of each of your guests. Distribute certificates acknowledging those donations as favors.



ADDITIONAL B'NAI MITZVAH OPTIONS AND RELATED PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY THE JEWISH UNITED FUND/ JEWISH FEDERATION OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

- The **Send-a-Kid-to-Israel Partnership (SKIP)** unites families, congregations, and the Jewish Federation in a special savings incentive program, beginning in grades 3-6, to help high school and college students participate in an approved Israel Experience program as an integral part of their Jewish education.
- The **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Gift of Israel** enables youngsters to open an interest-bearing savings account for an approved Israel experience during high school or college. When a minimum of \$1,000 is deposited into the account, the Jewish Federation provides a \$180 matching gift towards that child's approved Israel Experience.



- Through the **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Israel Experience Certificate** program, the bar or bat mitzvah receives a \$120 certificate toward a future approved Israel Experience as a gift from the Jewish Federation.
- **Israel Experience Vouchers** valued at \$100 each are awarded to participants in Israel Solidarity Day/Walk With Israel who contribute \$100 or more. Vouchers may be assigned to any young person through age 23. Recipients may be assigned one voucher per per year.
- **JUF's Partnership 2000 region, Kiryat-Gat, Lachish and Shafir**, has been partnered with Chicago for ten years and aims to improve the quality of life for its residents as well as make lasting connections between the Jewish community of Chicago and the people living in Israel. Instead of collecting items and shipping them to Israel, b'nai mitzvah students could raise funds which would be transferred to Israel. JUF's staff in Israel would facilitate the process and make sure that the items were purchased and distributed appropriately. This method not only bypasses customs issues, but also supports the Israeli economy.
- Share your b'nai mitzvah experience with others. Visit the bar/bat mitzvah stories page on the **JUF Tween** website (www.juf.org/tweens/tov_volunteer.asp).



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WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED AFTER YOUR B'NAI MITZVAH

Even though your b'nai mitzvah is over, tikkun olam is not a one-day event!

Get on the Volunteering Path with TOV!

The JUF TOV Volunteer Network links prospective volunteers to volunteer opportunities in the Jewish and larger community, so members of the Jewish community can participate in the mitzvah of tikkun olam, or repairing the world. TOV works with individuals and groups of all ages and interests.

Add your name to the TOV teen email list at www.juf.org/tov/mailform.asp and receive monthly updates of teen-friendly volunteer opportunities in the Chicagoland area.

Good Places to Start

Merry Mitzvot/Mitzvah Mania:

Three times a year, TOV offers volunteers a chance to get involved through its Mitzvah Mania/Merry Mitzvot projects. The Mitzvah Mania/Merry Mitzvot projects are month-long calendars of one-time volunteer opportunities. Mitzvah Mania/Merry Mitzvot provides the perfect opportunity to fit volunteer opportunities into busy schedules. Visit www.juf.org/tov/Mitzvot.asp for more information.

The JUF Uptown Cafe (www.juf.org/tov/cafe.asp), 909 W. Wilson, Chicago

The JUF Uptown Cafe, located in the Dina and Eli Field EZRA Multi-Service Center, is Chicago's first kosher anti-hunger program. The Cafe provides four meals per week to people who are hungry while, at the same time, nourishing their spirits. Dinner is served Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings, and brunch is served on Sunday mornings. Volunteers, ages 12 and older, serve meals and visit with guests. Volunteers under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

Volunteering for Teen Nights at the JUF Uptown Cafe is a great way to donate your time to the community; you can meet other teens and have fun while serving those who are in need. Teen Nights are usually scheduled for holidays such as Labor Day and Memorial Day when many schools are closed. Please note that all scheduling for the JUF Uptown Cafe is done over the phone.



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