

Synagogue Menu of Volunteer Opportunities

JUF TOV Volunteer Network

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In-House Mitzvah Projects:

Projects you can do within the walls of your Synagogue

Project: Create a Blanket or Decorate a Tzedakah Box

Description: Are you passionate about the rights of women and children? Learn about domestic abuse and the Jewish community's response, while creating a quilt or knitted blanket for a woman in need or painting a tzedakah box for your home.

Age: Adults only

Project: Create Flashcards for Immigrants

Description: Several JUF-affiliated agencies work with new immigrants to the United States to resettle them and help them find employment. Help teach these new Americans English by creating flash cards that teach them key words and phrases.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Make Cards for Soldiers

Description: Jewish soldiers in the Israeli and American armies are always in need of encouragement when they're far from home. Create cards to soldiers to offer holiday cheer or year-round support.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Create Crafts for the Elderly

Description: The activities staff at Jewish and community nursing homes coordinate BINGO games regularly with their residents and are always in need of BINGO prizes for the residents. Decorate picture frames and other useful crafts to donate to local nursing homes.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Make meaningful craft projects with Glazed Expressions

Description: In partnership with Glazed Expressions, TOV is excited to be able to offer this unique opportunity! Projects can be at a Glazed Expressions Studio, at your synagogue, or on site at JUF, and the options are varied and engaging. Learn about a local Jewish agency and decorate tzedakah boxes, mugs, frames or a set of new dishes that will be donated to the local agency being discussed.

Age: Family friendly

Agency Mitzvah Projects:

Year-round Mitzvah Projects

Project: Serve dinner for the hungry

Description: Volunteers are needed on weeknights and Sunday mornings to serve kosher meals to the less fortunate and socialize with guests.

Age: 12+

Project: Sort food at a local food pantry

Description: Volunteer to provide a safety net for Jews in need, by assisting at a food pantry for clients who are less-fortunate and need help feeding themselves and their families. Help those in need by spending an afternoon or evening at the food pantry sorting donated goods.

Age: 7+

Project: Sort clothing donations

Description: Two Chicago agencies in the Jewish Community run thrift stores where the less-fortunate are able to receive donated clothing, household items and furniture. As donations are received, volunteers are needed to sort the items before they can be distributed. Donate your time to this worthy cause and spend an afternoon or evening helping out at one of these thrift stores.

Age: 12+

Project: Sort donated school supplies

Description: Each year, volunteers are needed to pack, sort and distribute donated school supplies for educational facilities for students with special needs.

Age: Adults only

Project: Help facilitate foster care training

Description: While new foster parents are busy being trained by staff, volunteers are needed to entertain the kids! Make a difference by doing arts and crafts projects and playing games with children ages 3-18.

Age: Adults only

Project: Interact with students with disabilities

Description: Assist the teachers at a Highland Park facility for children both with and without disabilities by engaging the students in play on a weekday afternoon.

Age: Adults only

Project: Plant a garden

Description: Seeing a beautiful flower garden can brighten anyone's day – but this is especially true of those who are facing hard times! Improve the world for someone in need – plant a garden at outside of one of the many Jewish agencies supported by JUF in Chicago.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Friendly visiting with the elderly

Description: Many elderly residents in local assisted living facilities and nursing homes are in need of companionship and assistance. Volunteers can assist in serving meals, giving mini-manicures, visiting with residents, leading discussion groups and classes, and reminiscing about their past.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Wheelchair Wash for the elderly

Description: Here is an ideal opportunity to brighten the day of a senior citizen while providing an invaluable service – spend a summer afternoon in the sunshine washing wheelchairs and getting to know the resident who sits in it on a daily basis.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Dance with the elderly

Description: Bring your dancing shoes for this event – the older adults at a local Adult Day Center like to stay active, but they need your help. Spend an afternoon learning to square dance with the clients, providing physical support and companionship.

Age: Adults and teenagers

Project: Do a special project with the elderly.

Description: When it comes to helping the Jewish elderly, the opportunities are endless. Host a game day or barbeque at a residential facility, lead a game of BINGO, sponsor an ice cream social, facilitate an art project, or assist in celebrating Shabbat on a Friday afternoon. If you have an idea for a project to do with the elderly, TOV can make it happen.

Age: Family friendly

Seasonal and Holiday-Related Projects

Project: Help the needy celebrate Rosh Hashanah or Passover

Description: Not everyone has the luxury of having enough money to buy the groceries that are necessary to celebrate Passover and Rosh Hashanah. Assist in assembling and delivering food packages to Jews in need in Chicago and its surrounding suburbs so that they may observe the holidays in a traditional and dignified manner.

Age: 12+ for warehouse, family friendly for delivery

Project: Prepare for Passover at a homeless shelter

Description: Volunteers are needed to help prepare the kitchen at a homeless shelter in the Jewish Community for Passover. This mitzvah is called Bedikat Chametz, the traditional sweeping of crumbs.

Age: 8+

Project: Lead a Passover Seder for families of children with disabilities

Description: The Therapeutic Day School is designed to meet the needs of students with behavioral and emotional disorders and attempts to provide an atmosphere that helps to alleviate these behaviors. Help them celebrate Passover by helping facilitate their Passover Seder.

Age: Adults only

Project: Celebrate Passover or Hanukkah with the elderly

Description: Most people think of a Passover Seder or a Hanukkah party as a time to share with family – become a surrogate family member to the elderly this year at the annual Seder or Hanukkah party of a Jewish nursing home!

Age: Adults only

Project: Spread the simchah of Purim

Description: On Purim we emphasize the importance of Jewish unity and friendship by sending gifts of food to those in need. Help out by volunteering to assemble these special packages and deliver them to needy clients.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Deliver meals on Thanksgiving

Description: This is a great family-friendly activity for those who would like to do a mitzvah during the holidays! Share the spirit of Thanksgiving by helping to assemble and deliver food packages and catered dinners on Thanksgiving morning.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Serve a Thanksgiving lunch or dinner for the elderly

Description: This year, spend the week of Thanksgiving helping others – assist nursing home staff as they set up and serve a Thanksgiving meal to clients and reminisce with the residents about their Thanksgiving memories.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Shop for winter outerwear

Description: Help keep youngsters warm this winter by assisting with an annual coat drive. Volunteers shop for warm winter wear for clients using donated funds.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Celebrate Chanukah with the needy

Description: Volunteer at an annual Chanukah celebration for nearly 1,000 guests – for most needy clients, this is the only Chanukah celebration in their holiday season, offering not only food, but joy, celebration and a chance to be with others at these special times.

Age: Family friendly

Project: Unpack and sort holiday gifts for those in need

Description: The holiday season is a time for giving – give your time by helping to unpack and sort gifts for clients of two agencies in the Jewish community. Your efforts will ensure that children across Chicago will receive gifts this holiday season.

Age: Adults and teenagers