

What Acts of Kindness Will You Perform in 2022?

by Jeffrey Leventry

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On December 29, I received an e-mail from my local Presbyterian Church entitled “Thank you for all that you do!” that listed many of the things that parishioners did in 2021 to make a positive difference in the community. The list was very impressive and included various accomplishments such as: packed 27,000 meals with Rise Against Hunger to help food insecure families across the globe, provided 128 boxed Thanksgiving dinners to families in need, dedicated a home with Habitat for Humanity, supported individuals in recovery, spread joy to children around the world through the Angel Tree, Toys for Tots and Operation Christmas Child, and provided warmth for homeless neighbors.

As the new year begins, it is important for all of us to think about what we did in 2021 to assist those who are less fortunate improve their lives. It is also critical to ask ourselves, could we have done more to help?

For me, the answer is rather simple. Yes, I know I can do more to support those who deserve a helping hand in the coming year. All that is required is a desire to act, a little effort and a plan for making a difference.

Examples of Acts of Kindness

Regardless of whether we perform a simple task or do something that requires more thought and effort, any act of kindness can make a tremendous difference to someone who is struggling to get by. In fact, it often takes only one thoughtful gesture to change a person’s life.

Here are some examples of things each of us can do to help someone in need:

- Donate our gently used clothing to an organization like Purple Heart who will gladly pick them up at your front door
- Offer our time to help create or package meals for an organization like Meals on Wheels
- Donate pasta and canned goods to your local food pantry so those in need can shop for food that they require to feed their families

- Volunteer at a children’s hospital or nursing home to support their entertainment programs for patients and residents
- Offer to drive someone to a doctor appointment or the grocery store so they can obtain healthcare services or groceries
- Visit a shut-in to provide them with companionship and a chance to socialize for an hour with someone who cares about them
- Volunteer to help a church, mosque, synagogue or service organization with a mission trip designed to make a positive difference in the local community
- Work with a local organization to help support their efforts to provide for the homeless, especially during the winter months
- Use your athletic skills to run (Run for the Cure), dance (Penn State THON) or bike (Ride 4 Autism) to raise money for a charitable cause
- Provide financial support for causes that align with your personal interests like the American Cancer Society or the March of Dimes

Especially now during the challenges presented by the pandemic, most organizations are seeking individuals who can offer their time and effort to support programs that assist those who are poor, destitute or lonely. Volunteering to serve others allows us to use our special talents, knowledge and skills in powerful way to help others.

The Benefits of Acts of Kindness

Regardless of what we do to help others during the coming year, there are numerous benefits that result from our acts of kindness – both tangible and intangible.

For example, many organizations depend on volunteers to carry out their mission and vision. Without volunteers, the organization’s strategic objectives cannot be achieved, and people in need cannot be helped.

Other benefits that result from our efforts include the following:

- Acts of kindness have been shown to benefit our emotional wellbeing and improve our overall happiness
- Volunteering helps strengthen social ties and the sense that we are part of our community
- Psychologists claim that helping others decreases overall anxiety and depression
- Supporting those who need our assistance may boost our self-esteem and fuel optimism that we can make a difference
- Medical doctors believe that our physical health may be enhanced by supporting charitable causes

In conclusion, the new year offers all of us a fresh opportunity to serve others who can benefit from our unique expertise and abilities, as well as our financial support.

In light of the examples referenced above, what will you do during 2022 to make a positive difference in the lives of those who need our help and support?